

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE



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brambles







# BRAMBLER

Literary magazine of

Sweet Briar College  
Sweet Briar, Virginia

Fiction  
Poetry  
Photography  
Art

**Brambler**

Sweet Briar Col.  
Sweet Briar, Va.



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Elinor Plowden



Ann Stokes

Anne and I stumbled aboard the train, asses still cement-wet, dangling rucksack buckles and clutching containers of orange squash in the hands which smelled of a Chinese dinner. It was 2:48 A.M. in the station and the luggage trolley that had roused us continued to scrape and drag its way along the platform. The smell of the town and the ticket room filtered down the stairs and mixed with the railroad, stale linoleum, rainy traffic, and empty candy wrappers. The air brushed past, like naked bodies damp from bath or sweat, deprived of its blackness by the all-night neon, taunting the din of suitcases and whistles with its apparent enclosure and disregard. We stood by the door until the concrete melted, the wheels buried their echoes in moist embankments, and dark clogged the windows. Through the corridor—cold in its grey rust, its glass turned mirror by the mourning crepe pressed close outside—like a roll-top desk, its endless doors and compartments, where families grew pink-cheeked from the plush, had sleep baked into the corners of their eyes, and watched the shade rings bounce. In the dry heat ankles itched, mothers withdrew cookies from string bags, and the seats sweated the smell of orange peels, pomade and dusty valises. The wind tore at the edges of the car—inside the air moved in charcoal rasps, turning dully in the tight passageway, tinged with steam and cigar smoke. We shit—squatted on our knapsacks against the pulse of the wall, half-closed our eyes in a ballet of sleep. All night we rode, between rattling doors and sooty draughts, we passed through the haloed points in darkness which were towns. WE gave our faces to the rail dirty air, to the windows bosom of peaty breezes. We croaked in coal-stained voices and spilled a jar of strawberry yogurt. We were ignorant of the land through which we passed, its earth overpowered by deisel fumes, its sheep lost to the passion of the wheels. Towards dawn we cat-curled in empty first class corners, sleeping as we hid from the conductor. All night-and morning we were stiff and crusted with half-sleep and coal dirt.

Hugh Rowland

# THE SEAL WOMEN

There was once a young man who, having inherited a small farm upon the death of his father decided that it was high time that he went about finding himself a wife. He set about the task with great determination, combing the neighboring farms and nearby village in search of a maiden to live with for the rest of his life. As he was handsome and a man of some property, he had no lack of willing prospects from which to choose, but somehow he managed to find something disagreeable in each—this one was too fat, that one too clumsy, another too harsh of voice, and so it went until he had exhausted the area's supply of eligible maidens without finding a single one whom he really thought satisfactory.

Tired and dejected at the ill-success of his venture, he was trudging homeward along the moonlit seashore one evening when he chanced to hear the sound of light, tinkling voices coming from some not-too-distant location. His curiosity pricked, he clambered up the side of a nearby clump of crags and peered down on the other side. At first, he was unable to see anything but the dark movement of forms and an occasional phosphorescent flash. Then, as his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, he nearly fell backward from his perch with surprise, for there below him on the sand was a gathering of two dozen sea sprites, dancing in a large ring, their silvery voices raised in a strange and lovely song of the ocean. On the outer rim of the ring of dancers, seal skins lay scattered about on the ground: the sea-people would clothe themselves in these skins when they were among the waves. It was whispered that if one could carry off a sea-sprite abandoned seal-skin while he walked upon dry land, the creature would lose his ability to return to his ocean home and would have to remain on land forever.

The young man was hypnotized by the dancers' movements and appearance, particularly that of one young girl who was especially graceful. Her skin gleamed a smooth, cool white in the moonlight; and her hair glistened in heavy silver-and-gold tresses which fell to her waist. The longer he gazed at her, the more infatuated

he became, until finally he resolved to capture her and keep her for his wife. He slid silently down the rough rocks, making no sounds even when the jagged boulder edges bit into his flesh. Reaching the sand, he crouched in the shadows until the fairy girl danced by: then he leapt out suddenly and grasped her from behind, catching hold of a clump of her remarkable hair and wrapping it firmly about his wrist as he did so. In a twinkling, the others had sprung into their sealskins and vanished into the tide, leaving the unfortunate girl to wail with anguish and fear at her predicament.

"There, there now! Do stop that howling, my dear!" said the young man, giving her small, awkward, comforting pats on the shoulder. "I have no wish to hurt you. I only mean that you should come and live with me, and be my wife." At this the girl only wailed louder. "Please, sir," she sobbed, "let me return to the sea. I was not made to live on land among men, and my beauty will slowly fade if I am forced to do so. Besides, I already have a husband, who is of the sea people as I am. It is best that one should marry another of one's own kind. Let me go, I beg you!" And she began to offer him various gifts—pearls and treasure from the ocean's bottom. The young man, however, remained adamant. "What is your name, my pretty child?" he asked. "Ondine," murmured the sprite, heartsick. "Well, Ondine, you shall marry me and come back to my farm to live. I will be a good husband to you." And so it was.

After some time, Ondine became resigned to life on dry land, but she was never really happy although the young man, as he had promised, was a kind and patient husband. A sea person, she was clumsy with household tasks: she could not spin or sew and the loaves she baked were generally as hard as rocks. Also as she had predicted on the night of her capture, her beauty began slowly to fade. Her long hair lost its gold-and-silver shimmer and became dull and scraggly, and her moon-bright skin began to turn sallow and wrinkled. Every moment during the day when she was not about some domestic employment, she would sit gazing sadly from

the little kitchen window out toward the sea. In time, she bore two children, whom she cared for dutifully, but even they never seemed to interest her very much: she could take no pleasure in their games and lighthearted caperings, since she was so unhappy herself.

One evening, she was sitting listlessly by the window after her family had finished supper. It had been an especially trying day: she had broken the butter churn and burned the currant cakes she was baking, and when her husband came in bearing a large mackerel for their dinner, she began to weep piteously and would not cook it, so they had to make do with a meal of bread and milk. She was staring dismally out at the ocean when her eldest son came up behind her, bearing something in his arms. "Look, Mother," said he, "at what I found when we were playing today. It was buried under the hay in the barn loft. May I keep it?" Ondine turned sorrowful eyes upon him, but her expression changed at once to one of joy, for there before her was her seal-skin, which her husband must have hidden long ago. She threw her arms about the astounded child and kissed him (she had never done such a thing before) and, picking up the skin, sprang out the door and raced down to the shore. Her husband returned to the kitchen just in time to glimpse her through the kitchen window as she reached the ocean. She stood in the moonlight for a moment—just a moment—at the water's edge, and it seemed to him that she was more beautiful than she ever had been before. Then, with a peal of silvery laughter, she leapt into the sea, where she was immediately joined by a great dog seal—her sea-sprite husband—and both vanished beyond the waves, never to be seen again.

ANONYMOUS

# Fires

fires enthrall me  
the way they consume things:  
wood, wax, private letters, Grandad—  
making everything ashes, grey and  
indiscriminately the same.

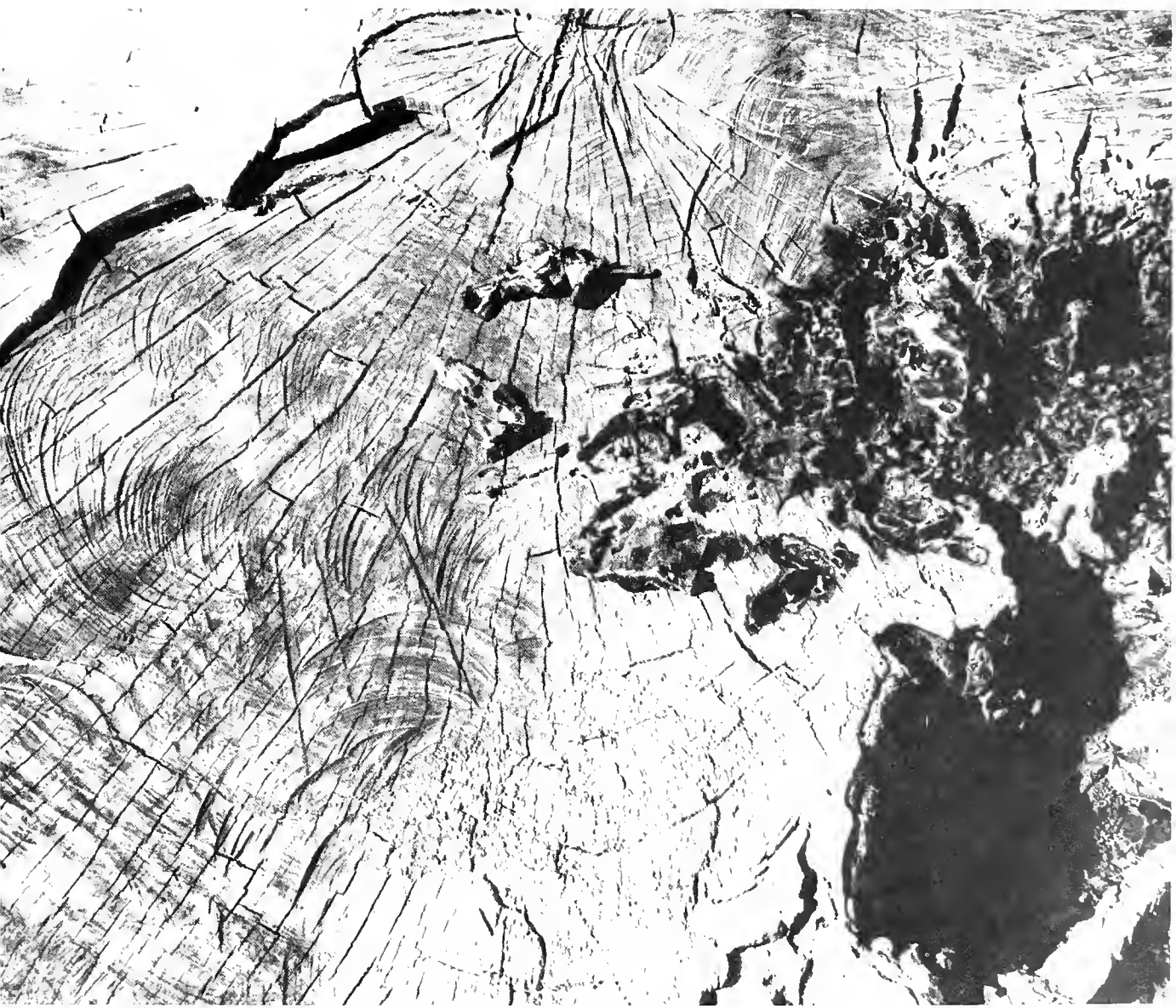
a huge red sky, closer than sunset  
and we drove to see the lumber yard burning.  
standing across the highway we watched  
flames snatch angry at air, walls  
fold in on themselves as  
billows of smoke rolled up, changing shapes.  
It held all our senses:  
the crackling and roaring,  
that good smell of wood burnt outside.  
grey ashes floated to us  
and we felt heat on our faces.

firemen, ineffectual with their  
silly spurting hoses.

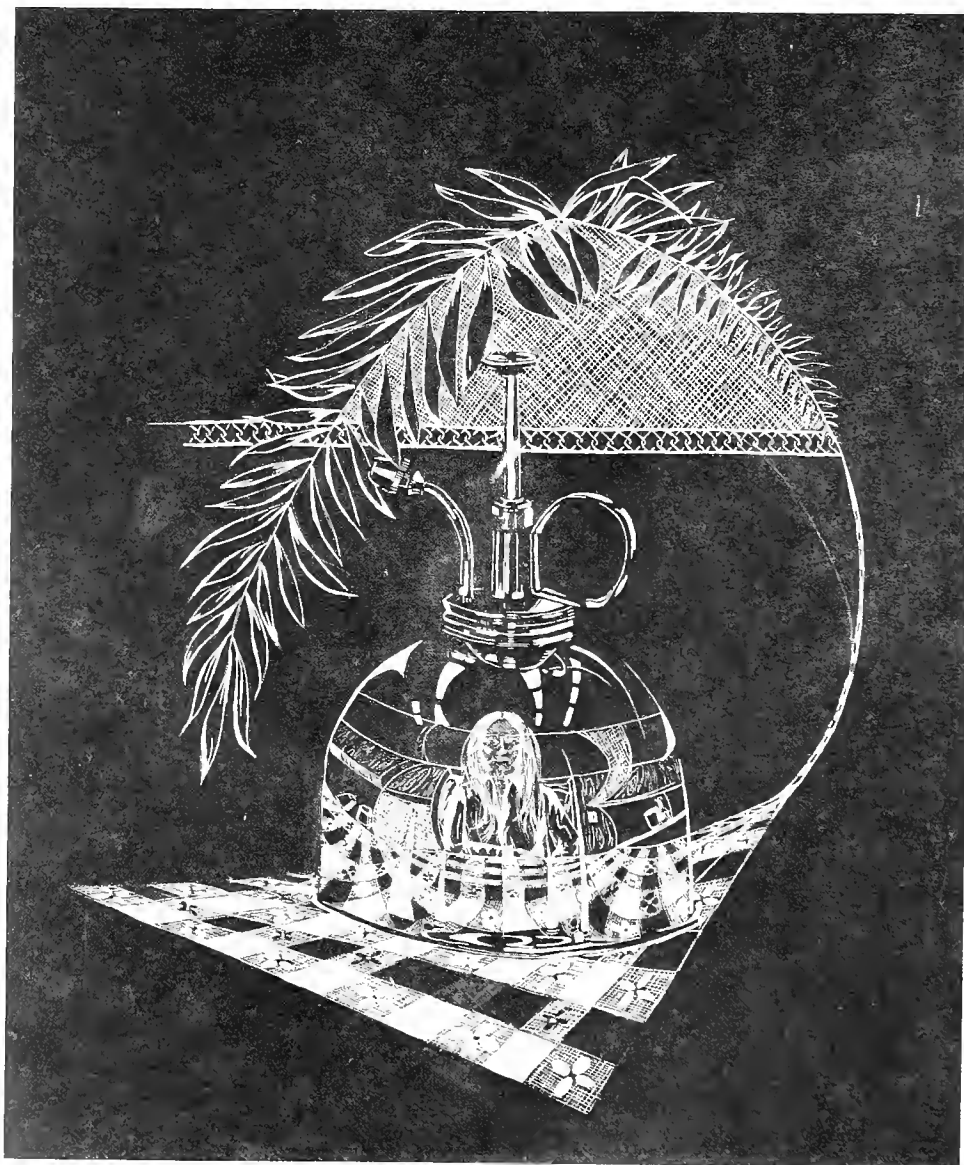
They did him in an oven—  
one minute Grandad, the next  
ashes that fit into a jar smaller than his hand.  
I would rather have watched the fire.

even a candle will distract me for hours.  
passing my hand over it, or a matchbook  
to see just how close I can get.  
I stick my longest fingernail in it and discover  
fingernails burn.  
with a breath, I make it flicker.  
Clapping two fingers together  
I put it out.

unburned



Chris Weiss



Constance Crocker



## BLOOD SPORT

We have loosed you in the market place, old man.  
You will recognize us, no doubt: we who torment you  
Have scarcely shaken off the cringing of other days;  
Beaten down a serf's awe to step forward,  
Toss a daring word or two at your unoffending head.  
Fingers poke toward pressure points: you smile,  
Bewildered, still courtly, unbelieving that these piled stones  
Are for you, and we—so newly strong—smirk grimly; retreat  
And draw back our arms, poised keenly  
For some imagined vengeance. Your transgression?  
Only this: omnipotence in our years of weakness;  
That incombatable benevolent despotry which breeds  
A kind of tranced slavery, a religion in its subjects.  
And now, while you sway slightly, frail and gentle, before us  
Expect no mercy: it is at your very skull we aim  
And will not miss; 'til sinking lower finally you crumple—  
Bloodied aged infant—and with filthy heels  
We grind and grind and grind you into dust.

A. Boyd Zenner

# Law and Order is a Fine Thing

Now, law and order is a fine thing. Being sheriff of this town for the last forty years, I am the first to go along with that. But the law is something that you have to adjust to fit the particular situation, and not just take and throw word for word from the book onto every case that you run up against. In Rockingham County we've been adjusting the law just fine for years. Take the moonshining laws for instance. If we had arrested all the people we'd suspected of moonshining, and went and broke all their stills to bits, we'd have arrested half the town and made enemies for life. I know for a fact that we'd have had to lock up three quarters of the deputies; and while they were cooling their heels in their own jail, some real crime might have started up.

Anyway, to my mind, there are some things that are worth investigating and some that are not. I mean of course you are going to look into a thieving or a murder, or anything like that where the wrong-doer is still on the loose, and likely to do the same thing again to somebody else; but, as far as I can see, there isn't too much point in investigating something that the solving wouldn't do anybody any good. If somebody disappears, and there is nobody much interested in finding them, then there is no reason to launch an all out search for them, right?

Old Johnny Keyton had always been nothing but a nuisance, and when that housekeeper came to take care of him, the town had two nuisances instead of one. Johnny, one-legged since the first World War, used to hang around Ned Price's Grocery Store all day long. He was always stopping traffic by walking right out into the middle of the road in front of moving cars. He would sit on the bench outside Ned's Store, just waiting to snag some passer-by into conversation, or to corral a bunch of kids, on their way to get a Coca-Cola, into listening to one of his stories. When he was telling the one about how he had got his leg blown off in the war, a whole gang of kids would sit in a semi-circle on the ground and listen for hours. They would drink three or four Cokes apiece before he'd finish. He always began:

"One morning we'd dug in not more'n fifty yards from

the German trenches. There'd been heavy fighting since dawn: rifle fire up close and artillery from behind both lines of trenches . . . Then all of the sudden, this guy, he must of been a madman, came tearing towards us screaming his bloody head off. He gets almost up to the trench we was in, when he pulls this handgrenade out of his belt and pitches it right at us. We scramble out of there just as fast as we can. I was half out when the damn thing goes off. Blew my leg clean off and killed a couple of other guys on the spot . . . Meanwhile acourse somebody'd shot this lousy crout . . . Our boys were so fired up that they took one of their own handgrenades, stuffed it in his mouth and pulled the pin out. The blast left a crater in his corpse as far down as his stomach and sent his jaw twenty feet into the air."

There aren't many of us who remember how Old Johnny Keyton really came to lose that leg of his. I was right little when Mr. Wilson went over to Europe to make the peace treaty, and every town in the county was having parades with all the women waving little American flags for the troops coming home; but I can still remember sneaking out of bed and under the front porch to hear the stories the grownups told about the war. This is what they said about Johnny Keyton: It seems that one night he was driving back to base in the jeep when one of the tires had a blow out. Rubber was scarce then, and what there was, even for the military, wasn't very good. Anyway, he was behind the jeep, taking off the spare or something, when this supply truck smashes right into the back his jeep. Keyton was pinned between the two bumpers and his leg was sliced right off. The driver of the truck put him and the leg in the back and took him back to the base. The company doctor, who they say, was only pre-med when the war broke out, stitched it back on with all the rust, gravel and splinters of metal still in it. Of course Keyton got gangrene so bad he almost died. He was never right in the head after that. Folks who knew him before he went in, said that he didn't have too much sense to spare then. So that's the real story of what happened, but I never spread that one around

town because I figured if Keyton wanted it spread, he'd do it himself. Otherwise it was best to leave well enough alone.

As years went by, it seems like Keyton got to be more and more of a nuisance. One day two ladies saw him urinate on the side of Price's Store behind the Coca-Cola machine, in broad daylight. They told Mr. Price that Keyton was doing something indecent against the wall of his store, but they declined to say what. I guess that's what got people saying that something ought to be done about Johnny. The last straw came when he told little Freddie Thompson that his father was the biggest producer of moonshine in Rockingham County. He went on to say that the boy's father's whiskey could lay the hardest drinking men out cold for days. Keyton added that the very shirt on the boy's back was paid for with the money the moonshine brought. That night Freddie asked his father at dinner why he wanted to lay men out cold, and if he had bought Freddie's T-shirt with a jug of moonshine like Mr. Keyton said. After Mr. Thompson, who was on the vestry of the Episcopal Church, had explained to his son that Mr. Keyton was just making up a story, Freddie asked if he could borrow a gallon to take to school and knock Bully Peters out with.

Soon after that, when the Circuit Court convened in 1932, Keyton was declared incompetent, and Ned Price was appointed as his guardian. Keyton kicked and screamed so much in court, yelling out that he'd be damned if he'd be babysat for at the age of forty, that everyone in the town was embarrassed. It was Ned's responsibility to see that Keyton got his check from the Veterans' Administration every month, that he bought proper clothes, and that he had a housekeeper to do the cooking and the cleaning. When Ned retired six years ago, the job of looking after Keyton passed on to his son Buddy, along with the Store. About that time Keyton dismissed the housekeeper he had had for fifteen years and demanded a new one. Buddy put an ad in the Harrisonburg Daily News, which, after about a month received an answer from one Flora Hemlick. They exchanged letters, and she was hired. The ad the Prices put in the paper sounded vaguely interesting—a little misleading is what it

was. Young Buddy Price and his father went to the train station to meet Flora and take her up to the Keyton place. When she got off the train the faces of the two must have been worth a million dollars. Flora, five feet tall, two hundred pounds, gave them a big toothless grin. Buddy said she waddled from side to side so bad, it was a wonder she moved forward at all. She looked as if she had football padding under her skin everywhere except in her hands and her head. Her hands looked like the claws on a crab. Her head stuck out of the massive shoulders as if it were straining to keep above water. Her gums, wrinkled and puffy, were like a scar from a recent operation. "Yessiree", she said, "I'm mighty pleased to meet you." Is this the one I'm supposed to be looking after?" she said pointing to Old Mr. Price. Father and son were at pains to point out her mistake. It was then that they began to have a feeling she had no idea what she'd be in for with Keyton. On the way up the mountain Ned began outlining the kinds of things the old man was not of a mind to do for himself, and the things he was of a mind to do, that she was to restrain him from doing, especially in public. He should be made to shave at least once a week, if possible, and must be made to wash himself at least that often. Ned warned her that he smoked a pipe the foulness of which she had never smelled before. "I'll fix that," she said. She may have been flabby on the outside, but she was all gristle on the inside. Anyway, when they got up to the house, the Prices introduced the two, and then they got back in their car and headed down the mountain just as fast as they could, hoping to be out of earshot when the fireworks began.

Nobody saw hide nor hair of either one of them for a week, even though Keyton had a car that one of them could have got away in if things had got bad enough. The story of the two Prices meeting Flora at the train station had got all over town by this time, and everyone was crazy to see this flabby drill sergeant that was going to reform Keyton. After about a week, Keyton crutched into Price's Store and headed straight for where Buddy was standing behind the counter. Of course everybody stopped their buying to listen whether Keyton had murdered the woman the first day or whether he had

been reformed. The old man leans over the counter and starts raving at Buddy: "You done pulled the most damnable, low down, stinking trick of your lifetime, Price, besetting me with that living whirlwind of an ox! Why she's formidable as a brick wall, and cantankerous as a mule. The first day I got so mad, I hit her over the head with my crutch. She grabbed the thing from me and broke it over her knee and said if I didn't shave my whiskers, she'd break the other one.

"So what'd you do?" Buddy asked.

"Well, there wasn't nothing for me to do, but go and scratch that damnable razor across my face a few times."

With that, he crutched out of the store toward the ABC store across the way. Not long after, Flora comes in and makes a beeline for Buddy's counter.

"Why in tarnation did you lead me into thinking that that half-witted, peglegged piece of rawhide was an ordinary old man who needed tending to? What Johnny Keyton needs is a baby sitter, bull-fighter and warden all rolled up into one!" As she gestured with her arms, the fat that hung down from them wiggled like a jello mould. Buddy tried not to laugh as this mass of fire and flab stood before him with anklets of flesh that rippled over her red sneakers. Seeing he was having trouble containing himself she leaned over the counter and hissed at him: "you got me into this by trickery and pure bald-face lying, and I hope you burn in hell for your deceit!" Well, that wiped the smirk right off Buddy's face and kept him quiet for half an hour. She left the store to round up Keyton. On her way into the ABC store she happened to spy him urinating against the back wall of the building. She snuck up behind him and kicked the crutch he was leaning on right out from underneath him, so that he hit the ground sideways and in a hurry. Without saying a word she walked around him and into the store.

There was no question but that Keyton had met his match. One day when he and Flora were sitting on the porch in front of Price's Store he decided that he would impress her with one of his stories about the war in hopes that, if she realized what a hero he had been, she would be a little more respectful. He started in about the time he

had fought under Gallieni when he split German armies at the battle of the Marne and turned what looked like a coming defeat into a great Allied victory. He told her what it had been like to be in the infantry which persued von Kluck as he retreated by forced marches. He had helped force them back to Aisne and across the river. Flora waited until he had finished, then said to him, "You know damn well that the Battle of the Marne was in 1914, and that the United States did not even get into the War until 1917."

She continued to hold him under her thumb like this for the next five years until one day Keyton got into his head something he was bound and determined to do, no matter what. He had gotten a letter from his cousin Leroy saying that his grandson was getting married and that they were taking that opportunity to have themselves a family reunion. Johnny was welcome to come if he was of a mind to. By this time he was getting on in years, he must have been at least eighty, and his driver's license had been taken away long ago, but he got into his head that he would get out there to Ohio for that reunion somehow. It was finally decided, much against the wills of both of them, that Flora was going to have to go with him. They were going to leave August third of last summer. Before they left, Flora came in to see me about whether I could get my boys to look the other way if she let him do some of the driving, because driving long distances gave her terrible headaches. I said, in this county, considering that he wasn't dangerous or anything, but just went awful slow, that it was probably alright as long as they stuck to the back roads. Outside this county, though, I told her, we didn't have any jurisdiction. If she was going to let him drive in West Virginia they would have to look out for the State Police. Most of your local police can be made to understand your situation and then will let you go on your way, but to those Staties, the law is the law come hell or high water. She thanked me for my advice and said they'd stay on the mountain roads the whole way then. And as far as I know that's what they did.

About three weeks later, Mrs. Kegley, who always had her mind on someone else's business, began saying to

Buddy Price at the store, "I wonder what's become of Johnny Keyton and his housekeeper? Weren't they supposed to be back from Ohio by now."

Apparently she began talking to a lot of other people too, because pretty soon guys started coming up to me in Joe's Bar and other places and saying that Mrs. Kegley really had her dander up about me. It seems she was furious that I had not begun a fullscale investigation. Finally, one afternoon she came in to talk to me face to face about it. I told her straight out that there were some things that were worth investigating, and some things that I can't see any reason for bothering with. Besides, no one had even filed a missing persons report on them. Well, right away she wanted to do that, but she didn't know some of the necessary information, like last known address, and addresses of next of kin. She must have done some researching, because she came into my office the next week with a whole list of facts and figures on both of them. She sat there with her stinging little eyes fixed on me as if she meant to put me under her spell and then send me out to scour the muddy bottom of every river in Rockingham County for that car. I told her that I had put out an APB on the car for a few days, and would send the missing persons report on to Richmond at the end of the month, along with the record of the month's traffic violations. She jumped out of her chair, and acting like she'd gotten a fish bone caught in her throat, she sputtered and hollered at me that I was the hardest, cruelest man she had ever run up against. Waving her crooked finger in front of my face she said that she would get to the bottom of this if she had to call in the National Guard.

If I had thought that Mrs. Kegley actually cared in the least what had happened to the two, she would not have sent me into such a rage. Mrs. Kegley prided herself on being the most charitable and Christian woman in Bridgewater. She was in the church choir, taught sixth grade Sunday school and ran the bazaar last spring. After knowing her for more years than I care to remember, it seems to me that the real reason she is such a faithful churchgoer is so that she can keep abreast of parish gossip and take note of who is making eyes at whom during the

service. I doubt that she has ever looked down at the prayer book in her life.

That is why, when this reporter from Harrisonburg called me to say he had a story phoned in that there were two persons missing in our town that the Sheriff's Department would not even go look for, I almost put my fist through the nearest wall. Well, I explained the situation to him, that there were no next of kin close by, that neither of them had a job except one to take care of the other, and that most of the people in the town had forgotten them both by now. He thought that he had stumbled on an exclusive, or a real human interest story that would stimulate editorials, but I pretty much set him straight on what the facts really were. He said he would print a small article on it anyway, if it would be of any help to our department, and I saw it the next week, in the back, near the obituaries. It was enough to satisfy Mrs. Kegley, though, and she continues to hold it over me as proof of her triumph. I suspect that will be the last we hear of those two.

Sherry Buttrick



Constance Crocker

## Persephone

Child, who has snared you in these webs of sleep  
That you will curl you silken head beneath  
One drowsy arm, surrendering to deep  
Nocturnal fancies, potent dreams which seethe  
With such odd colors as the mind may cast?  
The winter world is lost to you: you live  
Only those colors (From some day long past  
Or yet to come, if ever) which may give  
Some life to half-thoughts spun in measured pace—  
The slow and steady cadence of your breath  
And the bedclothes. Will you turn your face  
Away from this stark land in drowsing-death  
Forever, or will Spring's bright silver song  
Awaken you, though you have dreamt so long?

A. Boyd Zenner

## The Wrong Answer

Trust you to present,  
With a tabulated flourish,  
This mathematical account  
Of imperfections—  
Mine, of course.  
But dear, your timing's somewhat off,  
For when did you count me  
Among your legion numbers?  
Somehow on your abacus  
I alone have managed to maintain  
A slight degree of integrity;  
So it remains  
To give you that precision  
You desire,  
And solve the problem for you:  
That minus me  
Leaves you without  
A margin for error,  
Since in your balanced equation  
There was no room  
For even a calculated risk.

Kathy Sue Orr



## Painting Faces

I've watched you grow  
Since before you were a shadow,  
But never have I seen you in this aspect,  
Like one who poses as a woman,  
Mourning what is not dead.  
Almost I discern the fine transparency  
You hide behind,  
Yet just before I've caught your meaning  
The light has changed,  
You've shifted in your composition.  
When did you acquire  
The need for artifice,  
A landscape,  
To explain yourself?  
Now even background  
Has become insufficient  
To delineate from truth;  
You add on years  
To subtract your youth.

Kathy Sue Orr

This happened four or five years ago. I'm not sure exactly, but it was the first summer Al and I had managed to convince our respective parents not to ship us off to some crummy camp for the summer. Al lives down the road from me, on the farm. He and I were the only two kids on the road; we were best friends sort of out of necessity.

It's a very dull New England road. Narrow, and hushed—only a few quaint houses, mostly furnished with retired couples. To appreciate the intensity of the road's dullness, you'd have to understand that one whole side's a bird sanctuary, and a good chunk of the other's historical preserve. Not that it's anything excitingly historical, like the Statue of Liberty or the Grand Canyon, just some ordinary woods where they suppose Paul Revere might have hung around once. You'd mistake it for the bird sanctuary if you didn't know better.

95 was the one bustling, modern note in the area, even if it was behind a lot of trees and strictly segregated from us by a massive chain link fence. It had only been opened that spring and people still noticed the buzz and zip of the interstate highway traffic, eight lanes strong, twenty-four hours a day. I rather liked 95. Sometimes I walked out to the fence and watched the trucks and cars stream by, south-bound, all hurrying somewhere. I noticed the generous interspersions of blue state police cars in the flow, riding herd, each driven by a grim, deadly trooper. They seemed so foreign to our fat, smiling town cop.

Being home for the summer didn't crack up to be all I thought it would. By the end of a hot July, blissful idleness had long since stagnated into execrable boredom. My parents smugly kept complying with my beginning-of-the-summer impassioned pleas for total free time; I couldn't complain. But I was ready to do anything for a change. Al was about in the same state, although he had the dubious diversion of an assigned daily chore. He had to weed the tomatoes.

I used to curl my toes into the warm, crumbly dirt and watch Al. Sometimes he would churn down the rows using a double fisted yank, right-chuck-left-chuck, almost submerging himself in a murky cloud of clods and weeds.

More often Al simply walked vaguely around the rows, stooping only occasionally to uproot a particularly blatant weed. You could tell his heart wasn't in it.

I realized weeding tomatoes wasn't Al's style. In fact, even today, if I hear about a bank being blown up, or a head-on car crash, I think of Al. It's not that he was especially radical or violent, it's just that he loved things like noisy explosions and disintegrating objects. Al, like a poltergeist, had an alarming propensity for transforming the most innocuous, pacific scene into bedlam.

I remember I was there when he babysat for his little cousin, Maria. Al had this motor, the kind you can make with spools of copper wire, and he started it humming and spinning. Then, somehow, he got it tangled in Maria's hair. She ran around the playroom, terrified and screaming, while the little engine relentlessly sucked in her hair. Al watched with clinical detachment until the motor ground to a choked halt and began to smoke furiously. I began to wonder if he intended to let his cousin burn to the ground, too, but he went into action at last and hacked the thing out of the depths of Maria's mangled hair. I prudently fled home then; I don't know how he ever explained this incident to his aunt. If he was punished, I'm sure he didn't care. Nothing fazed Al—authorities punitive measures, threats—he received them all with dreamy disregard. Once, only once, did I see his perpetual insouciance collapse, and that was on the steep banks of 95.

I suppose you could lay the blame on the tomatoes, or on our boredom, or even on the existence of 95, but when I get right down to it, I blame Al. It was his rotten, delinquent mind that formulated the whole idea. I admit it was my rotten, conniving mind that went right along with him, but it was still his idea.

In spite of the huge quantity of weeds in the patch, the tomatoes were extremely prolific that summer. At the end of July, they suddenly ripened—hundreds—all at once, juicy and resplendent. Al, transferred from weeding to harvesting, picked pounds and pounds everyday. He inundated his house with tomatoes, then mine, then even some of the quiet neighbors, and still the tomatoes lolled on the vines—increasing every day, fat and indolent. The

charm of a plentiful crop faded, nobody wanted any more tomatoes, we were all sick of tomatoes. Even Al's glum father indicated he didn't care anymore about the tomatoes, and he relieved Al of his duties toward them. The tomatoes didn't seem to miss Al, they continued to ripen, then, unpicked, swell to amazing corpulence, drop off the vine and finally rot. It bothered Al. His perfunctory weedings had fostered a proprietary attitude towards the tomatoes, he resented them rotting away. He stood there and glared at them, and I could almost see the vibrations of an explosive idea forming in my best friend's head.

The next afternoon I was climbing over the chain link fence for the first time in my life, cradling a large shopping bag filled very large, very juicy, and very overripe tomatoes. Al was right behind me with a similar bag. We were about a half mile away from home, for 'safety'. After a short, stealthy walk through some trees, we stood on top of a precipitous bank, overlooking 95. It was ideal—trees to hide behind, elevation over target, and a steep climb between pursuit and us. We stood behind a tree and cautiously, then exultantly, pegged tomatoes down onto the cars and trucks. It was wonderful. In a hour of well placed throws, I had forgotten all about my boredom. The reaction a juicy tomato creates landing on the windshield of a swiftly moving car is incredible. The driver usually swerves violently, or hits the brake hard when he is suddenly confronted with a viscid red smear on his window. Bewilderment—then he figures it out—ah, rage! But it is too late, he is swept inexorably along by the traffic, he looks in his mirror, fuming, but Al and I are out of sight. It was wonderful.

Al and I returned the next afternoon, and the next. We were obvious to the fact we could easily create a serious accident on 95. We didn't even consider what might happen if we were caught—dreadful, instant, heavy punishment from an enraged motorist, a state trooper, or our shocked parents. We just kept hurling soggy tomatoes onto 95. "Ssplat!" A direct hit. "Goosh!" "Ker-PLAT!" Al and I grinned and whipped some more down. We refined the sport, keeping score, more points for front windshields, bonuses for driver's side.

By the fourth afternoon, 95 was noticeably tomato

stained. And some of the driver's went by very slowly, looking, up, evidently aware of the area's hazards. We noticed that a little uneasily and agreed we'd change our position the next day. We were very observant, but we didn't observe the most important thing of all that fourth afternoon—the sleek blue car pulled up on the side of 95 about 500 feet away. I noticed it immediately after I noticed the sleek blue state trooper skulking up the bank, stalking Al and I. He was less than 50 feet away. Suddenly, I didn't have to consider what would happen to us if we were caught, I knew it would be the most awful thing that ever happened to us. I pulled Al's arm, he turned in mid-throw and saw him, snake, deadily and cold.

We turned and ran for the fence, just as the trooper realized the need for secrecy was over, and started sprinting after us. I saw Al's face—he looked ghastly, fully as terrified as I imagined myself to look. I still had the damn bag of tomatoes in my hands as I clawed over the fence, half full. The trooper was shouting at us now, but I thought maybe we had a chance once over the fence.

And then I looked back and saw Al.

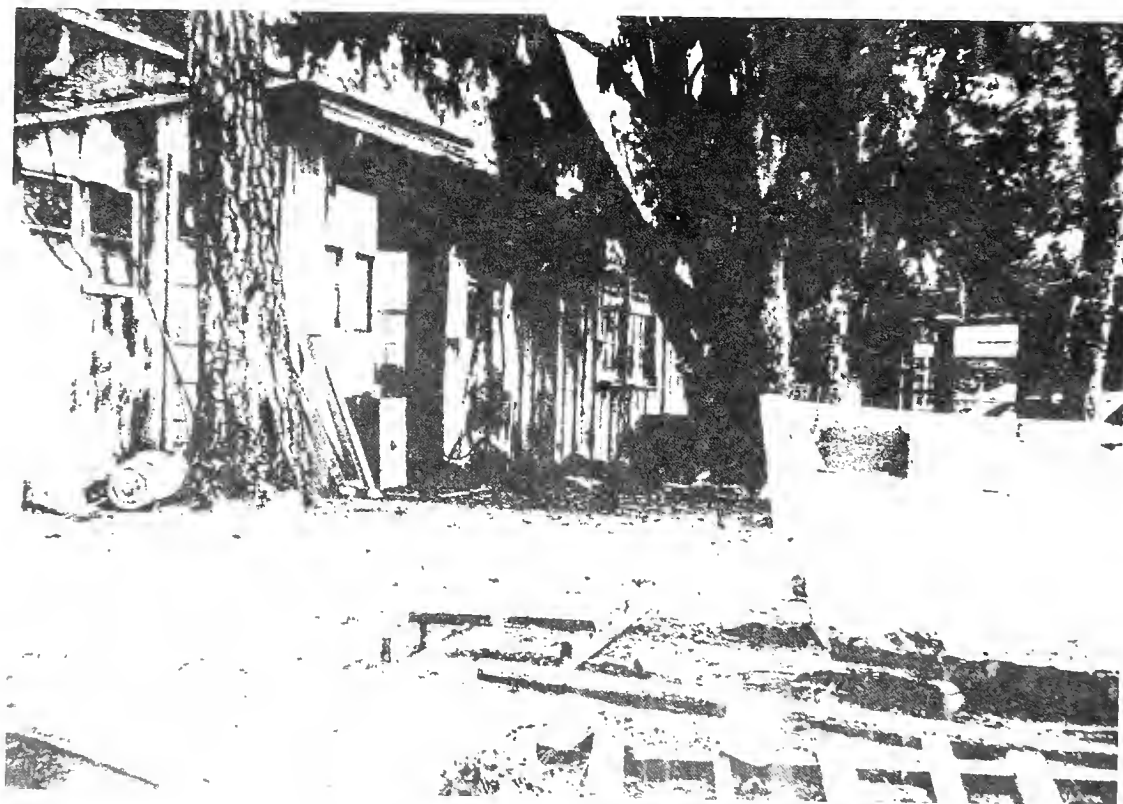
He was stuck on the fence, kicking like mad, half crying. His pants were caught on the pointed wire top and there he hung. "Je-sus! Je-SUS!" he swore violently, and kicked some more. The trooper was very near now, I heard him panting and crashing towards the fence. I heard Al's pants ripping as the trooper burst into view, bent on apprehension.

Just as he lunged, Al's pants gave way and he was free, and I, I hit the trooper in the face with a tomato. I didn't really intend to, I was horrified I had, it just happened. I thought maybe he'd shoot then, fell us in our tracks as we ran away, but all he did was swear and wipe his face. We made our getaway.

We never went over the fence again. The tomatoes rotted away at Al's house undisturbed. I didn't even like to look at them. Actually, after that I didn't go down to the farm much. Al and I avoided each other. The memory was too painful.

The next summer I went to the shore, meekly, and Al moved away. I was sort of glad he did. I think he was dangerous.

Jean Romanske



Shoron Mendelson

## Shoes and Socks

I was so tired, I could hardly stand it any more. I had been up really late for the past few nights trying to get several English papers written, in addition to going to classes and playing Basketball every day. In fact, last night I hadn't gone to bed at all, and I had consequently dragged along all day with barely enough energy to realise I was still alive. But everything was turned in, and tonight I could sleep as long as I wanted to. I was so tired, I just couldn't seem to get to bed soon enough; so I skipped dinner, and started to undress. At this point, my head felt like it was all hollow inside and someone was blowing through my brain with a strong freezing wind. My eyes felt as though Lawrence of Arabia and his band of reknowns were making a debut on my pupils, and my body felt as if it had been used as a club by a gathering of irate gorillas. Needless to say, I was hurting just a bit.

I sat down on the side of my bed and slowly began to remove my shoes and socks. Just had to get them off, then I could sink back into heavenly bliss. Took off the old beat-up pair of top-siders, then I was not a little surprised to see that I had also, apparently, put on my hockey shoes that morning. I couldn't quite figure out why I hadn't felt the two pairs of shoes all day, but I decided that it was because I was so tired. Off with the hockey shoes and, my Herman Survivor hunting boots! Now that really did puzzle me. Those things are heavy and really big because they have about an inch of insulation in them. I must have been really tired not to have noticed that I had all these shoes on. The next pair of shoes I took off, from under the hunting boots, were some I had never seen before: spike-heeled shiny black patent leather affairs with different colored sequins all over. Lovely, but I certainly didn't have anything like that, and I wondered where they could have come from. By this time, however, although slightly amused with myself for

having put all these shoes on, I was also a little put-out as well. There had really been no reason to do it this morning, no-one else had even noticed all day, and now I had to cope with taking them all off again before I went to bed. Finally I had come to what seemed to be the last of the shoes; a pair of Newmarket rubber riding boots. All I had left to do was take off my pair of blue knee-socks, then I could crawl into bed and promise myself I would never wear that many shoes again.

I should have known that if I had gone to the trouble of putting on all those shoes (that were now lying all over my room and even extending out into the hall a bit) that putting on a lot of socks would also have been the obvious thing to do. I had socks to match every occasion: tall ones, short ones, different color ones, hand-knitted ones, machine-made ones, kinds of socks I had never even seen before, kinds that I wore all the time. By now, I was really getting mad at myself for having been silly enough to put all this stuff on in the first place. I couldn't believe I had done it, and worst of all, there seemed to be no end in sight. And worse than that, I was determined not to go to bed until I had gotten everything off. No way was I going to bed with countless pairs of socks on my feet. I decided to turn on the radio to get my mind off the frustration of being this tired, this close to bed, and not able to get the rest of my socks off so I could go to sleep. I was close to tears with the frustration, I was no longer amused at the trick I had played on myself that morning. The problem was, I didn't remember doing it, so I didn't know how many more pairs of socks I had to take off before I went to sleep. So I turned on the radio, hoping to get my mind off of what I was doing. And woke up to the sound of my clock-radio alarm playing "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." . . . I was so tired!

Ann Lux Yellott



Elinor Plowden

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## Invitation

I invite you to live in this domain  
of armor rusting and battles losing,  
of dusty saints and emperors insane,  
of shattered towers, castle doors closing.  
Make yourself in exile and feel alone;  
weep torrents, silent weepers not heeding;  
count pity like money--call it your own,  
while all of us are banished from Eden.

Paradise, no, but gardens still welcome  
thirst to their fountains, the sun to their shade,  
tulips to open, poets to freedom,  
blizzards to lilacs, and nightmares to fade.  
Don't linger in the graveyards of defeat--  
Come taste the honeysuckle; it is sweet.

Karin Lindgren 1975

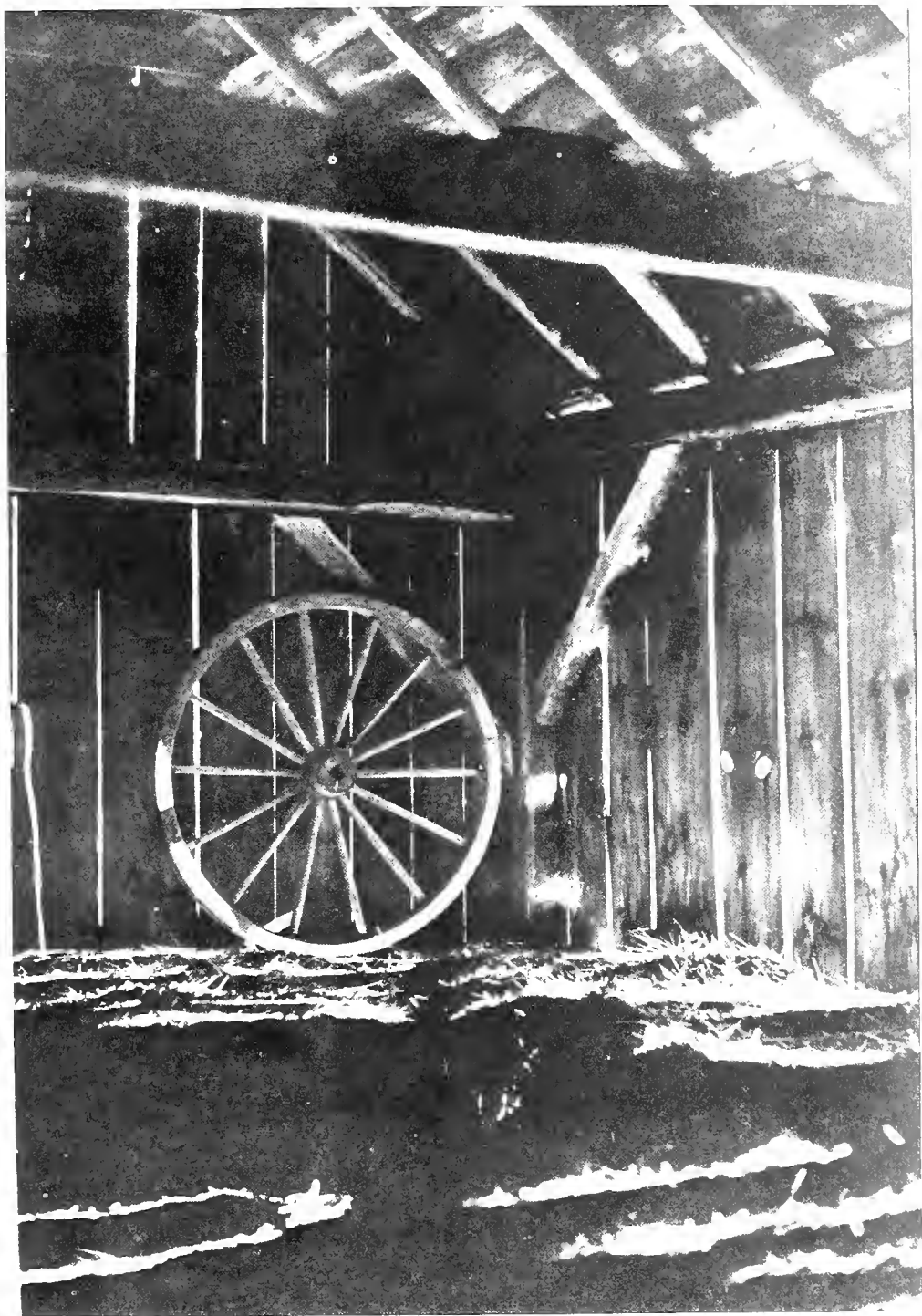


Ty Dahl

## Stilled Life

Nothing breathes;  
Then a breeze rubs the wall,  
Fingering the light.  
Like crickets' wings on silk  
The flowers shift  
Into a chinese shadow.  
The dandelions become plum blossoms  
Cut near a paper bridge, laid  
In a ginger-jar of jade,  
Not blue bottle-glass.  
What it is, and what it isn't,  
The weather will dry both leaf and petal  
To a cold and winter metal;  
So will the wind etch at your hand,  
Blow fingerprint alone  
To a fine and silver bone,  
That skeletal reality  
Beneath the surface.  
As the dandelion will have no shadow,  
Your hand will have no touch,  
Your face no mirror; nothing breathes.

Kathy Sue Orr 1975



Sherry Buttrick 1976

## **Persona**

That face in the mirror is not mine;  
That smile I gave you is designed.  
This voice that you hear is contrived;  
It's falseness ringing in flowery trite.  
These teeth that you see are but gates,  
That seal the black hole where fury rages and fate awaits.  
These eyes that blink shut, fight back the stare;  
Those lashes, long and bent, shield the fear.  
My God, that face is not mine.

Marybeth Connor 1975





Sally Barnes 1977

## The Pipa

She sat at the desk by the window watching the rain spitting at her. The misty crystal separated her from the outer world. The heat from the fireplace warmed her while the flames reflected off the walls and bathed her in their red-yellow brightness.

The sweater-weather day had started off sunny with an enjoyable walk across campus. On the way back from class she had checked her mail box — empty. The clouds began turning grayish and mixing one within the other in a wicker pattern. She slowed down as she noticed the lack of color in the trees. It had been an overnight change and the days zipping by were leaving her behind. The only noise she heard was the rustling of the arm of her parka against her side. She fished in her pocket for some fruit-flavored Trident. She felt some used kleenex, a half chewed Bic top and a dime. It had been there this morning, she was sure she had put it in. Impatiently, she dropped her books on the curb under the willow tree and dug down deeper. She pulled out a pack of Sweet Tarts, a tube of linty chapstick and a cigarette butt, and finally felt the waxy wrapper. She brought it out of the dark confusion of her pocket and saw that it was blue and not orange, but that was alright. Half the pack had already been chewed and as she folded back the foil to her dismay it was empty. Ah, yes! in econ she pulled it out and the kid next to her had given her one of those, come on, don't be such a greedy bitch and give me a piece looks. She began reorganizing her pockets, all those things salvagable in the left and those not in the right. This took about ten minutes during which she had sat down next to her books. One of the elongated branches of the willow tickled her nose as the breeze increased in the on-coming storm. After she was finished, she got up and as she was stooping to pick up her books noticed a pipa shell near the edge of the curb. It must have fallen from her pocket, where else would anyone have gotten it. Puzzled, she didn't think she'd seen it when she first sat down. The browned shell was shriveled with half of one side broken off exposing a section of the smooth ivory nut. A dried sunflower seed but how long had it been clinging to the lining of her pocket. Her hand clutched it tightly as she got her things together. As she was walking back to the house, the sky had become several shades darker and as she entered the rest of the kids were huddled around the tube watching the soap.

“Hi!”

“Hi! How was class?”

“O.K. But, god, he's boring! I mean really! I nearly fell asleep and what's the

joker do, but call on me.”

“Typical”

“What’s happening on the soap?”

“Not too much, Mrs. Chancelors still hitting the bottle and Chris and Snapper maybe getting a separation.”

She walked up the stairs to the second floor, opened the door which she never bothered to lock and dropped her books on the unmade bed. The pipa was still clutched in her hand, as she pushed away the yellow pages from a term paper the night before, leaving a small wooden opening where she placed the shell. She took off her parka and threw it by her books. Curiously, she wanted to find out when she’d put the pipa in her pocket. She looked for the journal she’d kept all last year to see if she could at least guess when. She thought to herself now where had she placed the journal the last time she had been reading it. With the pipa in view, she opened all the desk drawers, not there, now where else? She walked across the room and checked on the shelf of the phone stand and on the bedside table, but it was nowhere. She went to the head of the stairs and yelled down to a friend, who had been there, if she had seen it but she answered with a sharp NO. Puzzled, she came back into the room and sat down at the desk. Staring at the pipa, she noticed the longitudinal stripes and a piece of blue lint which clung between the edges of the shell. Sliding it between her fingers, the familiar touch came back to her. A knock on the door and she heard Nicholas come in. He greeted her and came to her side and placing his hands on her shoulders gently twisted her body and kissed her.

“What are you doing?”

“Well, I’m looking at a pipa.”

“A what?”

“A kind of nut we always used to eat in Madrid.”

“Where did you get it? You’ve been back more than two months and I thought you weren’t allowed to bring them back through customs.”

“In my pocket.”

For the next few minutes she nervously pressed the pipa between her fingers, and stared out beyond the bare trees to the mountains.

“Hey, cutie, looks like rain. How about I make a fire, think it’s suppose to be cold tonight.”

“Sure, whatever you want.”

Nicholas left the room and went down to get some firewood from the back porch. He paused for a moment and looked out over the serene mountain view, wonder-

ing if this gap between them would ever narrow. When he returned, she hadn't moved.

"Nicholas. I only wish we could . . ."

"Little one don't."

He pressed his fingers gently upon her lips to prevent her from uttering any other absurdities. He saw the alligators, as they had always called them, roll down her cheeks and holding her head close to his chest hugged her. Nothing else was said and as he began building the fire, she continued her search for the journal. As a last resort, she decided to look in her suitcase since she and Nicholas had gone to see her parents the weekend before. After pulling it out from under her bed, she unzipped the flimsy top, and lifting it, she saw the red-leather book. It had taken quite a beating during the last year. The binding was broken and there were places where the leathers color had been worn away to a light pink. The strap connecting the back flap to the lock had been cut in desperation one evening when she had lost the key. With a sigh of relief, she came back to the desk and began flipping through the pages.

August 19: Loose and I take the Metro to Moncloa to have our last drinks on Princesa. On the way, stop and buy a kilo of pipas for our last days venture. Sort of a chilly day. Sad as we sat and cracked shells. Have a few wines and end up running into some of the old gang who we had wanted to see before we left anyway. Then we all decided to make a night of it and went to dinner at La Tuna to have our last greasy but cheap meal. Carlos was unable to join us for dinner but met us later with more of his friends. Then off to Club 42 for the last time. Everyone bought us a few drinks — it was neat and we saw all our waiter and disc jockey friends. Danced up a storm Home late and finished packing . . . Leaving in a few hours.

"Hey! Little one. 'member me? How do you like my fire? Pretty nice no? My mom always told me I was a good boy scout."

She said nothing but flipped back a few months and paused on a page where she'd stained the corner with chorizo.

September 19: Loose, miki and I walk to school, Louisa already there, she had that early Don Quijote class. Drag like usual. Then we all go back to the residencia and have lunch, what else but eggs bummer. While taking our siestas, the phone rang and it was Antonio and Guzman and they wanted us to go to a soccer game. We discussed it and decided to go thought it might be fun. Glad we did. Bring wine and lots of pipas and all of us get pretty high and end up throwing the shells at each other and everyone else. There were millions of them all over the place.

Real Madrid beats England by two goals Yeah!!! Go out after and have a few more wines and end up getting thrown out of the bar, because of throwing Antonio's birthday cake around. Decide it's time to go home. Fun night!

“Come on, damn it. Do you plan to spend the rest of your life reading that book? You've got to live for now and if anything think of me. I feel like we eat, sleep, study and even party with that damn book.”

She had no reply but promptly closed the journal. Sliding it into the top desk drawer she got up and began fixing dinner. They spent a quiet dinner. Nicholas had offered to do the dishes so she let him and went into the other room and sat by the fire listening to the rain. She had at least helped him by carrying the plates into the kitchen, and as he began scrapping off the leftovers into the garbage, he paused. The beaten up red leather book was at the bottom of the can. He was puzzled as to when she had taken it out of the desk and placed it there. He stooped down and picked it up. Grabbing a Scott towel, he wiped it off. Taking several steps across the kitchen, he opened the cabinet and placed the journal on the back of the topshelf.

Suky Smith 1975



Shari Mendelson 1975

## Stonegate Won the Fifth

“You know,” Eddie said thoughtfully, “just between you and me, Rip—”

“And me” I said.

He gave me a soft, startled look then, as though I had just fallen through the roof or something to materialize on the narrow seat beside him. “And the wall” he amended. “I think Oliver must have been in a little deep with the bookies. He looked like someone had just lifted a noose off his neck there in the winner’s circle.”

Rip considered. “Did he have it bet?”

“Five hundred both ways, and I think he back wheeled the perfecta—he must have cleared—let me think—” Eddie frowned out at the rain slicked highway and grappled with the equations. It was late.

Rip flung the truck headlong into the night, driving hard and sure and unthinkingly. A band of diffused traffic light laid across his nose and dark blank eyes. He drove with small faint thoughts of his bed and warm blond girlfriend (but that was still too many miles and hours away to acutely anticipate) and a dull miserable awareness of his hurt back and nauseous stomach. The back and stomach were unhappily related via the horse pain-killer the vet had shot him up with that afternoon, when he had just thrown his back out with an unfortunate lift and it hurt so knife-sharp and brightly he had to have something or explode into a dazzling shower of pain particles. A vet had good naturedly administered a blush pink bute solution with a massive plastic horse syringe, changing the dosage with regard to his patient’s specie. It was half that which commonly and illegally shaved two seconds off a sore-legged horse’s race time, and it was enough to airily disassociate Rip’s psyche from socroiliac for nearly six hours. It had enabled him to drive up to the track with Eddie and to take Stonegate to the paddock in a sort of competent fog. But Eddie had had to harness Stonegate himself before the race because his groom had begun experiencing an unpleasant side effect of the bute, turning an almost laughable shade of green, retching and vomiting in a corner of the musty paddock stall all through the second, third and fourth races. After that his gut felt better but he began to feel his back again—a sustained and vibrant note in his chorus of bodily miseries. He forgot for a while after Stonegate’s win.

but on the long drive home he felt rotten, and could only couple his appreciation of his stomach's increasing calm as the drug wore off with his anticipation of greater back pain because it was wearing off. Rip pushed the truck on a little faster, straightened slightly behind the wheel and winced.

"Thirty-eight hundred" Eddie said to no one in particular, casting the flat conclusion out into the conversational void. "Thirty-eight hundred" he repeated softly, with vicarious satisfaction.

"That's alright" Rip said. "Think he had the sense not to blow it all on the late races?"

"God, no," Eddie laughed, "he's a crazy bastard. I can just see him laying four grand on the nine-ten double. I can just see it." The possibility seemed to please Eddie; the utter extravagance and stylishness of winning, then losing, four thousand dollars in one night of racing appealed to him. He grinned and shoved me a little closer to the gearshift with an exaggerated stretch. Then he observed, practically, "but I hope he didn't. Because if he gets in too deep with the goddamn bookies, he'll go bankrupt and lose his horses. And I'll be out an owner and two horses and eight bills a month in training fees." Eddie grinned again, evidently considering his career as a trainer-driver of Standardbred horses safe for the moment, and added an afterthought cheerfully: "Why do I always get the crazy owners?"

Rip's reply was inaudible but it didn't matter. Eddie was still high from the race: from flying down the stretch and realizing he and Stonegate were tons the best and they were going to win; from knowing he drove the race exactly as he had wanted to; from his owner's beery congratulations and the photographer's flash puncturing the starry winter night. He was high from it all, flushed with victory, fortified with self esteem and the knowledge that for two minutes that night he was the one that mattered—the one that proved his superiority before five thousand people and caused them intense joy or disgust because of it. Eddie smiled unseemingly at wavering red taillights and unread green highway signs flashing by in the fog. His racing colors were wadded behind his head, gleaming faintly blue and gold even in the dim truck cab. He turned to look eagerly over at Rip and I, started to say something and stopped, because what he wanted to share with us was inexpressible, an impossible transmittal of feeling and experience. He wanted us to think about the race with him, to remember just how it was. He wanted us to ask him many questions about the race, and possibly have us upturn some forgotten



detail of the race from his memory that he could turn and examine like a small bright found pebble.

*Stonegate*, I thought. *Stonegate* won the fifth. A little bay horse with a thick shaggy mane and delicate starred face. A friendly round-barreled racehorse who raced gamely on bad legs. Two bad knees in front, sore stifles behind, fore ankles so hopeless that the nerves had been surgically removed so the pain impulses could no longer flash to his sensible horse mind and warn him he was destroying his ankles by racing. That they'd only last another year, maybe two, depending how hard and often he was raced. His knees were injected with cortisone and his stifles injected with iodine, also stopgap measures that kept him racing but lost effectiveness with time. The horse in general had been injected one hour before going to paddock with a mixture containing pain-killer, amphetamine, and a breathing aid, all in doses carefully calculated to be undetectable or unlooked for in urinalysis.

I thought about how *Stonegate* might not have won if he could have felt the aches in his legs, and then I thought how I almost hadn't seen *Stonegate* race. I almost hadn't gone to the track at all. I had been afraid I'd get to the track and not be able to return because buses didn't run that late. Yet I felt I had to go, because I knew Eddie was driving *Stonegate* and it was the last day of vacation and I wouldn't be able to see a race again for an impossibly long time. I had worried the problem all afternoon and finally decided to take the bus up, somehow contact Eddie and ride home with him and Rip. I knew they'd be driving back after they cooled *Stonegate* out and tucked him in his stall for the night.

I had waited nervously in the city's state sweaty his station, early by a half hour, watching pay TV and the indifference people waiting beside me. I looked intently for the hard core plungers, bookies and hustlers that I imagined the callous city would spew forth to brave a two hour bus ride to a northern race track. But the bus was old and the riders nothing more than bored gamblers. They were all older than me by at least ten years and mostly men, but that is true of gamblers nearly everywhere. I exchanged a few tense sentences with a superior looking man sitting next to me; he said he once drove and said I said uh huh and thought he lied and he asked me who I liked in the fifth and I said *Stonegate* and he smiled deprecatingly and didn't say anything more for the duration of the cold ride.

The bus halted before a long line of shining turnstile and we burst from the inchoate microcosm and splintered into our forty eight separate entities. I stood there and watched them bolt through the turnstiles and immediately meld into the anonymous mass of people beyond. I wondered briefly how they were getting back to the city and if maybe they knew of a bus I didn't, then I contemplated the very real possibility that I'd never get close enough to Eddie to even let him know I was there and then I pushed my way through a turnstile, slowly.

The first was just going off then, and by the end of the double I had read my program through several times and walked all over the grandstand and quietly despaired of ever riding back with Eddie and Rip. Because the public was sternly segregated from the stable area by chain fences, and there was a moat affair to keep us from getting too close to the actual racetrack. When I tried walking way down to where the ditch terminated I was standing in the dead flowerbeds and a security guard came and took my arm. He told me I couldn't be there. It was a bitter cold night and I was the only person of five thousand to be walking outside in front of the grandstand. I walked back inside, it was an uphill walk and I felt the people inside were all staring critically down at me from inside the glass.

I watched Stonegate warm up and post parade. He looked elegant and powerful and very far away. I couldn't really see Eddie well. I bought a six dollar combine ticket on Stonegate and tipped him to several unheeding fans. But I actually never thought he'd win.

Stonegate came off the gate sharply and drifted to the rail, steadily accelerating. He made the top by the first turn and stretched his lead to four lengths by the half. He was seriously challenged at the head of the stretch but rallied and won going away. He'd led almost every stride of the way, I was wildly excited and didn't feel the cold at all. I followed Oliver down to the winner's circle, which was just a round clearing. Oliver looked mildly enthused and relieved, he held Stonegate's head for the photo, said something to Eddie, and hurried away. I walked into the clearing as Eddie started to walk Stonegate back and said "Hey—you did alright." He stopped and looked surprised, sitting there on the sulky seat behind a wet and heaving Stonegate. I asked if I could go home with them and he said sure and told me where to meet them and that was settled. Stonegate tossed his forelock impatiently and started to move off, I turned to leave.

I watched Eddie walking Stonegate onto the track. He was smiling like he'd never stop, and suddenly he looked back at me and shouted, "We won for fun, didn't we?"

I shouted back "For sure! Just jogged" and walked back up into the crowd.

Jean Romanske 1977

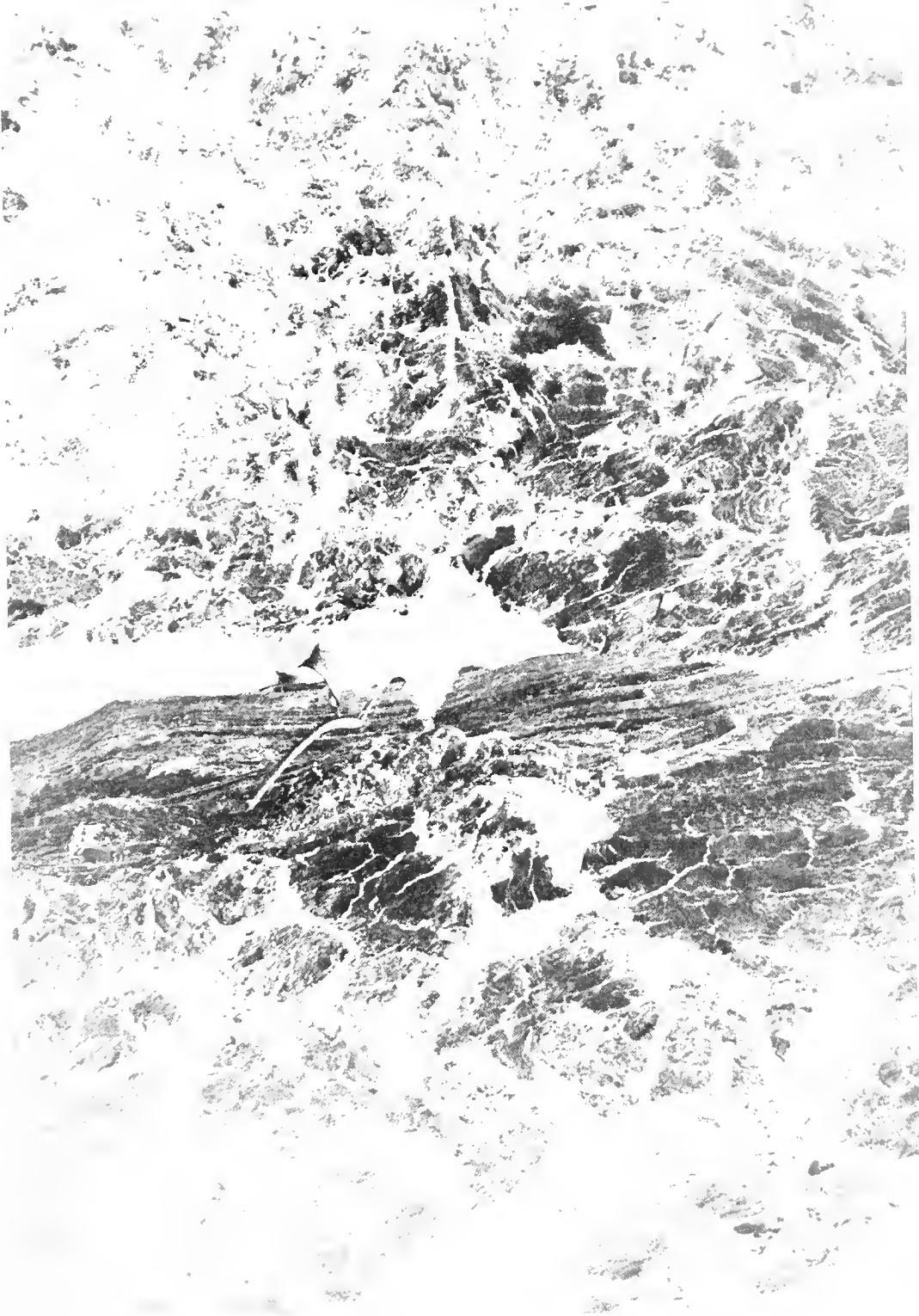
Ariel Taylor 1976



## **Ocean of Faces**

ocean of faces  
    surrounds  
    the leafless tree;  
waves rush in  
    looking at you;  
all in the land  
    of Alice;  
the wind blows across  
    the earth  
    painting it yellow;  
clockwork smiles  
    from 12 to 13;  
the blind bird of China  
    laughs at  
    the company below —  
scorching Mother Nature.

Christie Anne Scordas 1978



Ann Stryker 1976

### **La Femme de la Mer**

it seems all very  
strange to glide  
through the skin  
of the channel; the  
froth the ferry  
makes is  
wild and full of  
air; mists are  
like muslin  
gliding across  
my face and  
body with  
their fine filaments.  
it's overcast, a bit  
chilly. you see  
my dear, i enjoy  
this very much.  
as she plunges  
into the sucking,  
flapping waves.

Christie Anne Scordas 1978



Ty Dah

## Limperary Crippleism

In the poem by the poet, it observed on first impression, that the genesis of the creation begins with line one. The progression becomes a continuance of the lines toward stanzaic completion. The symmetry which is constructed by the capitalization of the initial letter of each pseudo-couplet is augmented by the minisculization of the final letter of the same. Moreover, although the poem is embarked upon, it is also completed. Hence, the totality of the work is preserved by the integrity of its diction. To be specific, although quotation proves inconclusive due to its inevitable particularization, an unabridged citation of the primary source gives additional substance to this critical analysis. To this end the poetical work is here reproduced in full:

“XXXXXXXXXXXXX . . . .  
XXXXXXXXXX.”

In the above passage the underlying intent of the artist is implied. By means of subtle incomprehensibilities, the initial theme becomes obscured into its proper symbolism. Thus, the impressionistic motif of the work gives rise to the insubstantiality of the critical expressionism. Moreover, due to the increased inclination to procure sources of clarification and direction set forth by the more accessible literary critiques, and also to procure a capsulization of the work rendered by the Monarch Series, a corresponding decline in the availability of not only the former, but also of the latter has necessitated the inopportune completion of this thesis.

Thus, henceforth, and in conclusion, the primary objective of the work has been attempted, while its completion has effected its integrity. It is therefore feasible to conclude that the stanzaic and linear functions of the poet's poetry have greatly facilitated his expression. Moreover, the unrelenting adherence to obscurity of symbolic and thematic concerns of the poem enables the critic to deduce that the work not only maintains its own complexity, but also becomes one of the most conspicuous elucidations of modern poetics. Hence, by way of conclusion, the end is accomplished.

Sherry Buttrick 1976



**I started to write an autobiography, but even totally you meant too much to me so I abandoned it and wrote you a letter.**

I'd been sitting in here for two hours, twenty-five minutes, and thirteen seconds the last time I looked at the clock. That was two cigarettes ago. I'm waiting. Now I'm thinking.

I remember, basketball season, wrestling season, football season . . . pictures. JD gives me pictures of basketball players, wrestlers, and football players. I don't want the pictures or the players. I want to see the glasses and what's behind them. The purple sweater with the panther on the front itches my arms. I wonder what I'm doing hurting my knees this way. The floor is crowded with bodies and voices. I can't tell which voice belongs to which body. I don't care. My attention is divided between the boy in the third row and the girl in the fourth row who keeps looking at him. Not the game.

A typewriter makes its way through the aisle coming toward the floor — toward me. The fingers on the hand that clasp the handle are thin. There are almost no fingernails — nerves. The rest of the arm is thin. The head is thin, the hair is thin and blond with some brown tint. The eyes are intense. His face is appealing, not because it belongs to the head on the thin body. Because it works, all the time, it's working.

About sixteen sets of headlights ago I got this God damn flat tire. When it happened I started to contemplate whether or not to fix it, I must have been hypnotized by my flashers, because I'm still contemplating. Not so much about whether or not to fix it, but what the possibilities are of surviving if I decided to stay in this car for the rest of my life.

I was born in Atlanta or so they tell me. I've always liked Atlanta, especially the elevators in the Regency downtown. They look like cigars, huge cigars with lights up and down and lots of speed. Hooped skirts, southern belles, y'all yes — I've always liked Atlanta. My father used to tell me there was a big sign outside the hospital where I was delivered to him and my mother that said I was born there. I never really believed him, but he was such an honest man I almost imagined I saw it once when we drove by. You can do that, think you see something you know isn't there. When people talk about flying saucers and how they believe in them you end up saying "Yeah, I thought I saw one once." When you really didn't. It's like lying, but oh hell, everybody lies. Even my father about that sign.

I have talked to JD. This has no great significance, except I'm not allowed to. We got busted at an Elton John concert a year ago and my mother never thought

too highly of him after that. He's in love with Kim. Really in love. That doesn't matter — the only thing that matters is that I talked to him. Everything could be the same. I know it could. He knows it too. But we're both too impatient. We know that time stands between us for at least a few years and it's too much to handle right now. Anyway, we understand each other. It's the strangest damn understanding I've ever seen. We think, act and feel alike — sometimes I wonder which one of us I'd enjoy being the most, because it wouldn't make too much difference if we changed places.

The possibilities of surviving here are very slim. I only have three more cigarettes. Another set of headlights just flashed by, leave it to Doug Behrmann to be the root of all my trouble. His father owns the Goodyear store in town. That's where this shitful tire came from.

My mind and my logic are tearing each other apart. Hopefully they will finish soon. I've done everything I've ever wanted to do. I know how to get what I want and how to get out of what I don't want. I don't want Behrmann. Mom loves him. I can't stand him. I know more about these guys than her. They're basically out for themselves and if you don't accept that fact, you end up unlucky and pregnant like Mary Beth and Rachel or you end up crazy, paranoid and defensive like me. At this point I can't decide which is the more appealing. Since the first seems to be more accepted strange at it might seem I can only say I'm glad I'm lucky and crazy, because I've learned to cope with myself like this. I even enjoy talking to myself — occasionally.

JD is the man of my heart. There are many feelings that run between us. Understanding. He believes, I believe we believe in everything together — we like each other. We're going to have lunch on top of the John Hancock building on September 6, 2013.

That's how I met JD. I went to prep school in Chicago and he was there for a newspaper conference. I knew he was from the paper at home. I had been a cheerleader and he was the sports writer for the Tribune. Drugs started to get their hold on the highschool scene so mom sent me to Chicago because she trusted me.

"Mag, what time it it?"

"Hey, Jen. You've got the watch."

"Oh yeah, I forgot." 10:15. My God this convocation was lasting forever. I could tell by looking at Maggie that she was still dreaming. It always took at least an hour for her to look like she'd even opened her eyes. "10:15"

"You're kidding!?" came the reply.

We should definitely have been sick."

"Shhhhh" Lindy Garethill chimed in sitting directly behind us. How she could possibly be more interested in the study habits we were supposed to be picking up

from this enthralling lecture than our conversation was beyond me, but then Lindy was a bit beyond me too.

Mag leaned over and dropped her program. I took the que and bent over to help her look for it.

“Jen, I’ll give you my cranberry dress to wear this weekend if you tell Lindy to get bent.”

“Oh, come on. She’s not all that bad. Hold on it’ll be over in a minute. Now get up. If we stay down here too long she’ll start a rumor about us like she did about Molly Crab.”

I straightened up and turned around. Looking her right in the lenses I said, “Get bent Lindy”

I saw Mag — in a single jolt she had dropped her program again and was biting the corner of her coat to keep from waking everyone in the auditorium with her roaring laughter. I was a bit surprised not to see her bouncing up and down as she usually did. Occasionally, there came a twitch in her shoulder or foot that reassured me I’d performed well.

“Roomie, you were great! I’ve wanted to do that for years.” Maggie beamed as we walked down the sidewalk back to the dorm.

“Yeah, well when I get my demerit slip tonight we’ll put it up on the board.”

“You don’t really think she’ll give you a demerit, do you?”

“Oh who cares, It was worth ten demerits to see you gnawing on your coat.”

“You’re right. Let’s go to the John Hancock building tonight.”

“O.K.”

Mag and I came here for laughs, JD came because he was stoned. Let me tell you about Maggie. She’s an excellent person. Not just special, or nice, but excellent. I never failed to be amazed at her opinion of things. It was like she viewed the world through two television screens — instead of eyes. Everything had it’s dramatic affect and conversations turned into scripts or dialogues. We went to the Hancock building often. You could see the Pepsi sign flash on and off . . .

On and off, on and off. Now, I’m out of cigarettes. Those damn flashers keep doing that on and off routine. I could kick myself for not taking the plane. What a mistake.

“last call for TWA flight 336 to New York. All passengers please have their boarding passes ready to show the stewardesses.”

My boarding pass was reading pages 83 and 84 of *The Sirens of Titan*. I was only on page 34. The Indianapolis airport had a separate wing for TWA. So I separated myself. I hoped it was raining in New York. JD had set up an appointment for me with the editor of a magazine there. I was playing public relations for him. He had to cover a story in Indianapolis and I was taking some of his work to

Mr. Herston in New York so JD could eat lobster on Cape Cod. I liked lobster too, but I wanted to meet Kurt Vonnegut. JD always said, "In time, sweetheart, in time." alias Humphrey Bogart. Jesus Christ, Casablanca was a good flick.

I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to turn off the flashers. Well, here I am. Maybe there's another smoke in the bottom of my purse. Wallet, comb, pieces of a check that I couldn't cash, my grandmother's phone number in Florida, glasses, pencil, ah, cigarette case, no smokes, three letters.

Letter I: JD — This was written after a conversation with Kim yesterday morning. She kept throwing the premonition shit on me like it was supposed to happen, well, I called to see what the haps were with Mary Beth and Rachel. It ended up costing me a fortune to straighten her out on something you could have done in a few minutes. I have more of a right to write to you than anybody. The only way she wouldn't understand is if you didn't want her to — basically that comes down to you being a charlatan. You enjoy, subconsciously, believing that emotional distress in a female is a mere exemplification of your masculine charm. I wrote to you to find out if things could ever be coherent between us again. You were my best friend. More than that, but it makes no difference now. This tends to sound like your basic depressed letter — my apologies. There's no other way to write it though. I'm not mailing it, because I've got to talk to you immediately. After you read this. I have to see your face and hear what you have to say. I can only tell that way. I don't want anything to change, I never did, it just seemed to happen. Tell me what's going on? Jen

Letter II: Well, this letter is a wedding invitation that is postmarked the day after the wedding. Kim must have really had her stuff together.

Letter III: I'm on my way to Cape Cod. Having a wonderful time, wish you were here.

Jenny True 1977

## Knife in the Dark

Daggers, daggers  
Everywhere --  
Did Macbeth know too  
That the moon is but a sword's pitch,  
Or fall, away?  
And that spear's path,  
Life's dark other day,  
Is laid in the tilt of the mind  
Before the hand can walk?  
Did he know what we know,  
Or see what we see?  
Now around us night is a knife  
Drawing a slow line,  
Like blood, on the low horizon;  
And night divides the day,  
Divides us, each from the other  
And from ourselves.  
We are cut off, asunder.  
We stand in the sharp air  
Close enough just  
To not touch;  
There is no space for us on night's edge.

Kathy Sue Orr 1975

## **Waterfalling**

Brown leaf floating on the water,  
once green and  
wind tossed,  
now wind torn.  
Floating as a sailboat or seagull,  
blown softly with a wet wake  
trailing behind the uplifted  
once tree attached stem.  
The dam pulls the leaf towards  
the edge of the  
water to the  
rushing of the  
waterfall;  
the Fall of the year and the  
brown leaf waterfalling away  
from the sky's fallen reflection.

Helen Gray Thomas 1975

For lack of anything better  
I put my pen to paper.  
Methodical moves  
On rigid lines  
Punctuated  
By gum drops  
And jelly beans.  
The thought-  
An elusive, shady  
Rabbit  
Darts in and out  
(Mostly out).  
Many times  
It runs and hops  
In circles.  
The thought  
Scrambles  
Into a box of crayons  
Savoring its colors  
And points,  
Trying to decide  
On the best one.  
Slowly the thought  
Emerges  
And spreads evenly  
Across the page  
Like icing,  
Until all the colors  
Are used  
And the points dulled.  
The rabbit-thought retreats  
Back into the crayon box  
And waits,  
To be used again  
In a different combination of colors-  
Next time.

Stanley Stuart 1975

## **Tower of Babel**

(2nd edition)

Companionship — Comaraderie  
Pages become glazed  
People endlessly chatter  
Books grow heavy  
Stairs seem steep

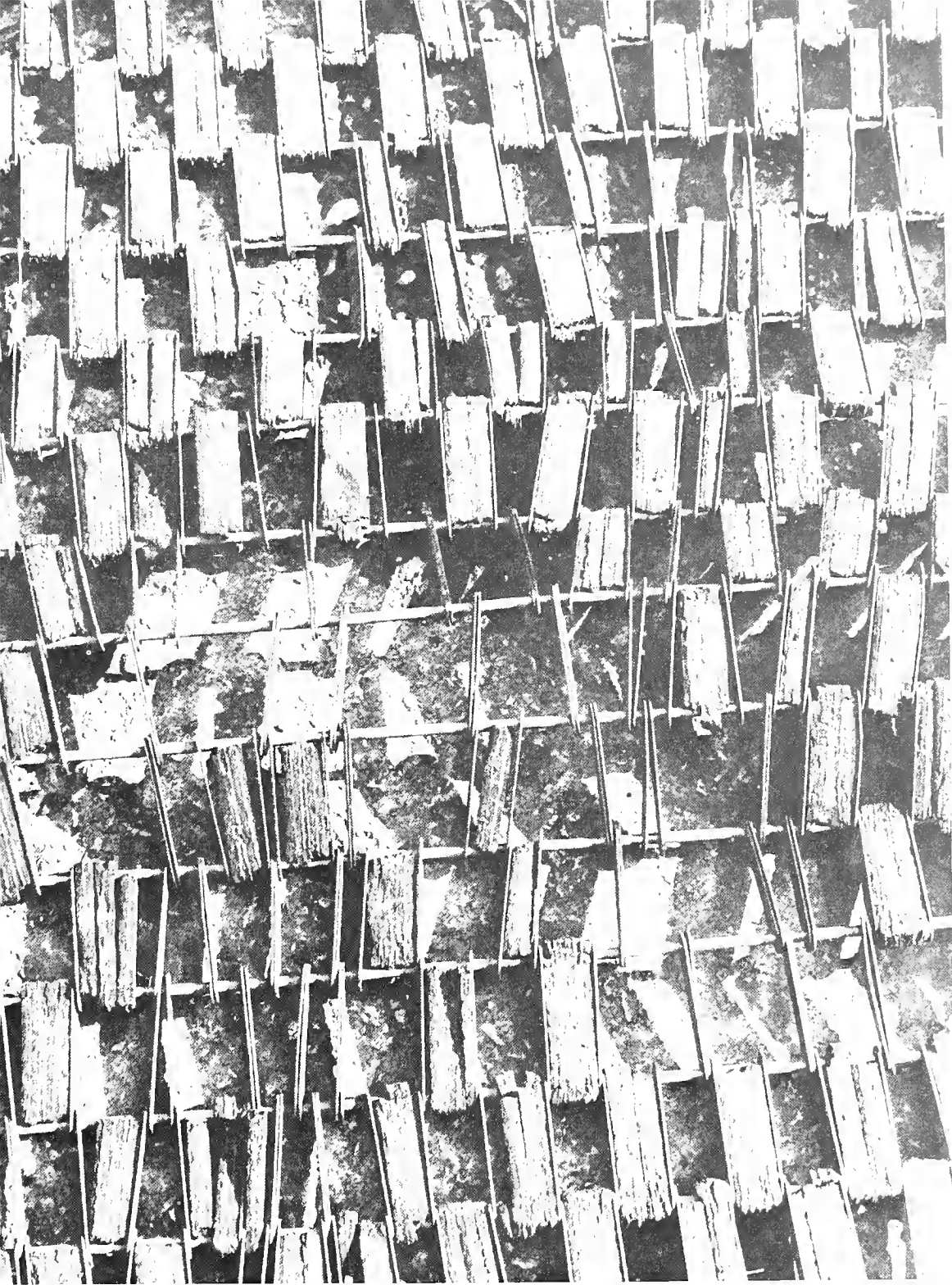
A rank smell  
    oozes from the tower  
A nauseous smell —  
    almost acidic

    Symbolism  
    Imagism  
    Aestheticism  
Frame happy haven

Professors stalk —  
    the Philosopher-Kings  
Harvard grads and Yalies  
Whither dost thou stoop,  
    Prof?

Marybeth Connor 1975





## Breakfast

(for J. and K.)

No reason;  
It was not the season  
For giddy mistletoe or candlelight,  
Spring was spent  
And their October was not innocent.  
But she found, refrigerated,  
(between the juice and jam)  
A poem, instigated  
Part in guilty recompense  
For late night business (his),  
And part in jealous curiosity  
For would-be lovers (hers),  
Beautifully entertained  
On afternoons when it rained.  
At his passion on ice,  
She smiled;  
Yet still he had ruffled the tranquility  
Of toast and the *Times*,  
With this, his adoration,  
Couched in rhymes.  
Lazily, in her head  
She tossed the various merits  
Of returning to bed,  
And turning off the coffee pot,  
She decided  
There was no better reason not.

Kathy Sue Orr 1975

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Sherry Buttrick, *editor*

Kathy Sue Orr, *editor*

Helen Gray Thomas, *business manager*

Karin Lindgren

Marybeth Connor

clarissanielsen

Linda Lucas

Ann Oliver





**brambler**

**SPRING 1975**

Cover by Lori Edgar  
“Perspective of a Tree”

**brambler**

**Sweet Briar College  
Sweet Briar, Virginia**

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This collection of poems by Polly Hadley won first prize  
in the 1975 Christie Anne Scordas Poetry Contest

### **Crucible**

You and me,  
walking alone  
stone-cold on First Avenue  
before dawn,  
we heard the thread of its pitch  
unwinding,  
hair-splitting,  
loudly rounding the corner  
on red steel and wheels  
that clattered manholes in their covers  
and swung the street around  
in a lariat of blood-colors  
not meant to warm  
us;  
soon left behind  
gray and desolate  
in the mourn of its wake.  
You pestled it then;  
speared the savor's ribs  
with your scrap-metal under its tires.  
Didn't you see the eyes inside,  
huddled in oilskins,  
burning,  
like twenty-four floors of death,  
in the nervous scratch  
of a match?

Polly Hadley 1977



## Like Ivy

In noon-time silence  
she enters my room  
spinning the dust in shafts  
that knife in yellow  
through the window blind  
while the shadows of her eyes  
mingle  
with the closet blackness  
that hangs between each dress  
and twist  
among my thoughts  
in the private dark of drawers.  
The carpet cringes  
under the waxed wood bureau  
sweating cold  
at her touch.  
She unfolds herself there  
in my room  
like the ivy that leafs and winds  
about our house  
prickling the painted brick  
gradually spreading over every inch  
its domestic greenness  
beneath which  
sinewy vines tighten  
in a death grip.

Polly Hadley 1977

## Everytime

The air races  
in and out  
between the cracks and crevices  
of storm screens and  
tall wood doors with keyholes,

chandelier flame tongues flicker  
from far away  
over the dining room table  
while the hall light  
at the top of the stairs  
burns a hole in its shade,

the Victorian gentleman  
austere above the fireplace  
smiles to himself  
in the shadow of his frame

everytime  
a letter,  
addressed "To" (underscored twice) "You"  
in slanted writing,  
is discovered  
among

the gas bill the water bill the bill from the  
orthodontist an invitation to the Reginald's  
cocktail party a flyer from Columbia House  
offering twelve albums free for only twenty-  
eight dollars.

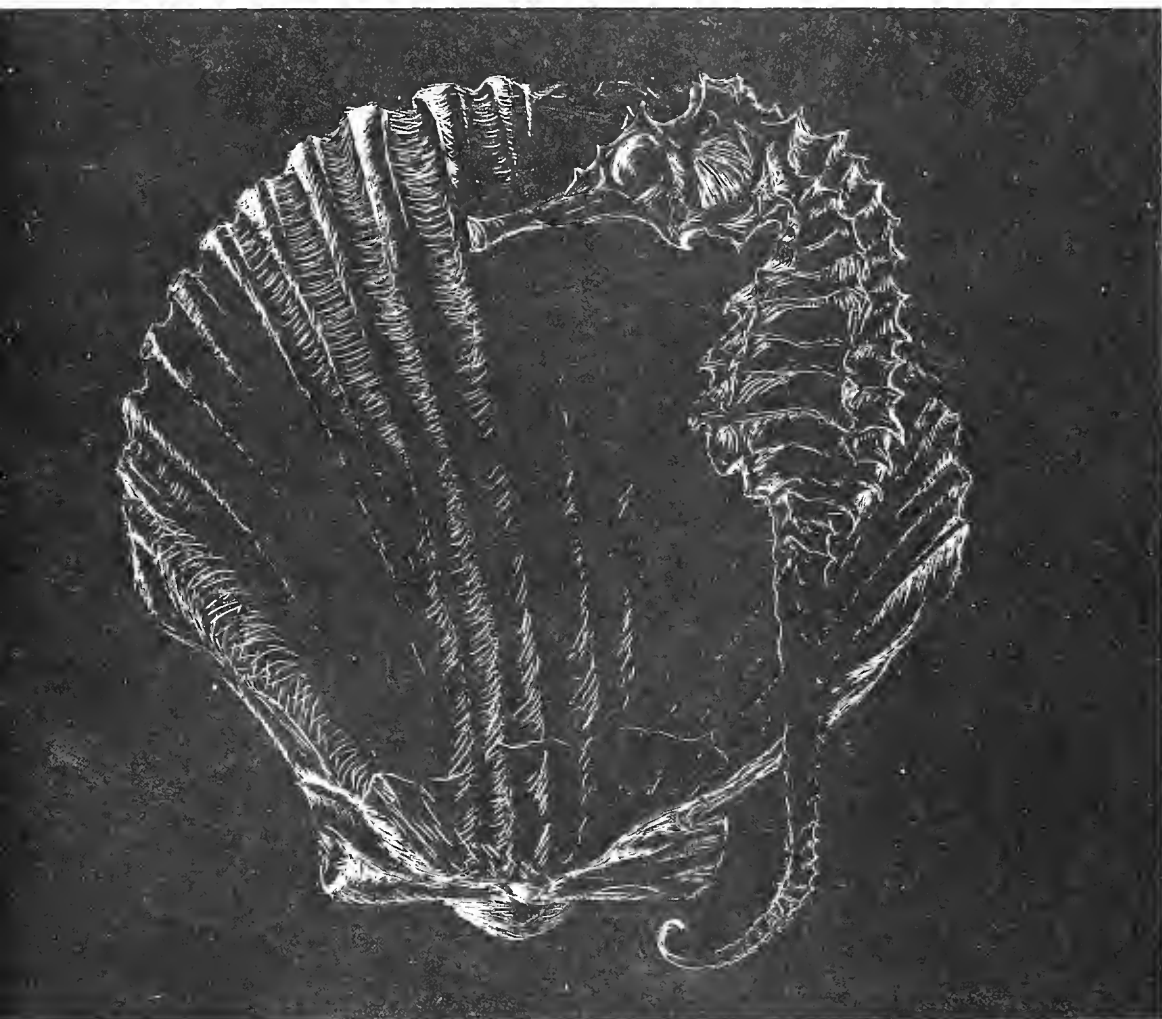
Polly Hadley 1977

## Cocoon

Alone  
in a room  
where the sun always dies  
just outside the window  
a man sits  
propped in tensor twilight  
against two pillows  
typed pages  
mirrored in horn-rimmed lenses  
penetrate slowly  
the glass  
the blue iris  
and drip  
candy-colored words  
and spike  
the intangible darkness of his mind  
with best-seller fantasy  
that can not shed the calloused skin  
the reality woven outside his head  
the black socks drying responsibly  
over the bath tub rim  
the leather brief-case leaning  
under the load  
in the hollow of a chair  
the cable cords of executive connections  
strengthened  
by steel of Penn Central rails  
that jar  
beneath cement soot towers  
beneath faces  
doing god knows what  
behind sheets of print

black  
and white  
and read  
and bleeding all over.  
These silk wires of the web he spun  
and wound  
tight around  
a cocoon  
in which he dangles  
white and black  
by one graying hair  
an unborn butterfly  
inside its own scarred womb  
gently rocking  
from an apple treetop  
in bloom.

Polly Hadley 1977



Elizabeth Farmer

### **Woodpecker**

A woodpecker am I,  
I a woodpecker.  
Rat tat tat, tat tat.  
I come from a genus  
Who set no premise  
At what we rat tat tat at.

Now, that sounds strange  
For woodpeckers of your range,  
Rat tat tat, tat tat,  
To peck away at random.

Yes, I know that fact  
Rat tat tat, tat tat,  
And we have only ourselves  
To blame for that.

We will die at length,  
And wish we had the strength  
To peck the heck  
Out of wood and cement,  
Then to make such a mess  
Out of the terrestrial nest.  
Rat tat tat, tat tat.

Marybeth Connor 1975



Allyson Wilmer 1976

This poem won third prize in 1975 Christie Anne Scordas Poetry Contest

### **Banking or Robbing**

The trust fund of your mind,  
locked papers in an untouchable vault,  
intrigues me.  
I think sometimes that  
windows open and through the  
screen I can touch tiny wired-  
in squares of you and then they close up;  
I am behind bars and plates again, looking at  
a reflection of myself in your eyes.  
Its funny that you hammer and crowbar  
at me when nothing is hidden and something  
and everything of mine is yours.  
So you sweat and grow tired in your  
efforts as I silently sit, awaiting  
the opening and closing of you, openly.

Helen Gray Thomas 1975





Carol Leslie 1975

## **An “Odyssey” From A “Diamond”**

Come around a mountain  
Into the sun,  
Then back  
Into grey, shaded areas.  
A “Tin Man”  
Wanders to heights,  
Leaving everything below.  
Una buena vista  
De dos muchachos,  
Sweeping sidewalks  
In front of another Floyd’s  
Only this time,  
A general store.  
A smoke stack and backdrop  
Mirrored in  
A glassy face.  
Ah, but the Dump  
Is closed,  
And we must “pass with caution.”  
Gliding along  
On a mountain  
With a butch haircut,  
Making our way  
Down an  
Off-centered part.  
Looking out,  
We see only  
“A cake with chocolate icing.”  
A dragon shadow  
Is silhouetted on my right,  
As I toss a Brown M&M  
Into an “Irish Gap.”

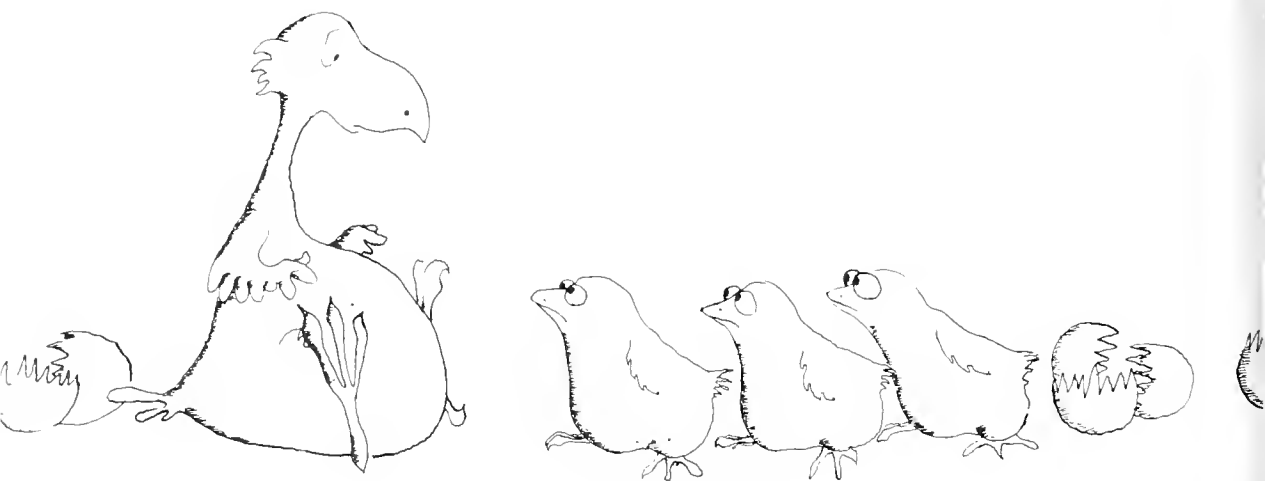
Only to land in snow.  
Every turn  
Shows forth  
Something new.  
Crystal flakes lounging comfortably,  
Each one an individual.  
You a flake  
And I another,  
Falling from the sky together  
Landing on  
A “distant shore.”  
A snowman named Neil  
Is ours now  
Due to reconstruction.  
Elevation 3145-  
A railroad  
At Yankee Horse Ride.  
The sign, wood with  
Carved letters,  
Painted inside,  
Is now chipping away.  
A new carving-  
“Our Day-11/23/74-N.M.S. & N.E.C.  
Moving on to bald spots  
A sole, young fir tree  
Stands tall  
Reaching up  
And gazing down  
At an absurdly placed  
Drinking fountain.  
The afternoon sun  
Tints the world rosy, amber.  
A little house with a chimney  
Puffs away,  
While outside,  
Young black heifers  
Stop to converse with us,

Against a cold yet  
Unusually warm afternoon,  
Then continue  
To chew away on their happiness.  
Meadow muffins  
Strategically placed  
To bake to a golden crisp.  
One baby black bull  
Out of season  
Plays alone,  
Carefully watched  
By attending mothers.  
“New Horizons”  
Bring a marshmallow cake  
And sheep.  
A young man’s voice  
Reaches up  
From the depths of a dell,  
While baby fir trees  
Await dinner  
In a drafty  
Day Care Center.  
Suddenly,  
A five point buck,  
White tail aflash  
Darts across the road  
Late for a rendezvous.  
More houses  
Late for a rendezvous.  
In the dark,  
An old man  
Chops wood  
Next to his front porch.  
Deeper and deeper  
Into the night  
We travel.

Stanley Stuart 1975



Randy Anderson 1975



Davina Davies 1976

## Pink Socks

The key turned. We maintained last minute comfort and laughter as we opened our doors. The cool, crisp silence of the early morning hour slapped us as we left the top tunes and easy warmth of the car. We carried our gaiety out and, as it intermingled with morning, we began to methodically unload rags, buckets, bottles of wonder soaps, and various other devices promising gifted cleaning qualities. Before us sat an elderly white wooden house with a greyed green porch. Half sleeping in the moist dawn, it questioned the necessity of our disturbing decadence. The green windows seemed to stare out in blank disbelief at our sudden arrival. However, their helpless position was confirmed as we dragged our belongings up the dozy steps and on to the well-worn but painted over flies porch floor.

A sharp knock brought a return to the earlier silence. The outer door was in no condition to receive such a blow. The wire mesh had long since given way, perhaps from too many eagerly pressed noses and hands. The hinges had given up also, therefore, the body of the outer door was resting on the inner door. While bearing this responsibility the inner door wore a peeling coat of green accented with a bright blue stick on flower.

Another firm knock on the outer door created a resounding cringe from the inner door. Then it yawned and, from the darkness slowly emerged Mrs. May. For a moment a faint, warm tingle spread through our bodies. Then we froze. Her swelling form blocked the doorway in a protest stance. Bright pink knee socks wrapped her swollen ankles which stemmed from ragged rubber slippers. Above the pink shoots swayed a multi-colored, flowered cotton skirt. This bag shaped bell was topped by a red plaid, flannel shirt containing a voluminous bust which descended out to her floating waist. There her hands like dried, knotted roots, spread. A red bandana cupped a beautifully gnarled, black face. Miniature flabby rolls in her cheeks repeated her volumes below. Carefully her hands reached up to re-adjust her butterfly glasses until she could more easily see with her functioning eye. The other eye, resting in seemingly fresh red tears, merely stared out blankly through the dusty lens.

After taking a careful look at us she began to recede into the blackness oozing from behind her as if the yawn was about to be completed. The inner door returned to the outer door which had remained motionless throughout the meeting of Mrs. Mays. Another knock brought her return. With fear of losing her again one of us spoke,

"Mrs. Mays, we are the girls from the welfare department.

We have come to clean your home."

Her reply was motionless silence, perhaps hoping that her presence might be forgotten. We did not move. She began to faintly mumble while fumb-

ling with the various doorknobs and latches. Then she motioned us in. We thought she had.

The first rooms' blackness was dreary, dark and damp. Its odor was of wet leaves. As we began carrying in our cleaning supplies the crackle of the radio on a sleeping station reminded us of the waiting car we had arrived in. The urge to run back to it was suppressed and, we settled in the first room.

After readjusting to its painful darkness we found the room to be completely filled with; boxes, bags, old plastic vases, dried flowers, a watering can, old dolls, bottles, an old treadle Singer sewing machine, a box television set, several desks, ragged bundles of clothes, and two Victorian sofas. These two bore the weight of more boxes, old plastic purses, and decaying shoes intermingled with Christmas cards and folded shopping bags. We stood in a small area of exposed tile which was cool and damp below our feet. Would-be welcome rays of warm sunshine were halted by the grey-black window shades pulled to their final expanse.

Mrs. Mays had faded through a torn sheet half covering the entryway to a second room. The radio station awoke with organ music and hymns. Mrs. Mays did not reappear, so we pushed through the doorway curtain. There we found a second room of material goods stuffed and overflowing on top of pieces of glossy black furniture. A bed was completely covered with yellow and cracking newspapers under boxes, clothes, and bundles tied with frayed cord. A coal burning stove was barely visible in the center of the room, and a small, pink glow from its upper belly beckoned us forward. A narrow path had been cleared through the room which we followed past the stove in search for Mrs. Mays. The coal dust had surfaced on all the objects in the room, and the pressure of the filth pushed us into a third room. The room appeared to be a kitchen.

However, a crumpled, yellowed daybed was propped up next to a cold white stove. The bed sagged under mounds of yellow flannel sheets and brown blankets. The form of Mrs. Mays floated among the folds of the mattress and its coverings. Suddenly she arose from the dark sea of wool and began rearranging various large jars of liquid on the stove. This room also had several large boxes stuffed with unknown treasures. The sink was smothered by pans, jars of liquid, tin cans, and large soup ladles. Flies were constantly racing between the sink and the stove with the finish line somewhere within the daybed. The continual stench of urine and rusted food cans pounded our nostrils.

A sharp ring jarred us away from our new observations and back to the second room. We continued on into the first room as the bell was sounded again. An evangelist was now preaching on the radio station. We waited for Mrs. Mays to greet the front door. After several moments she appeared in the draped doorway of the second room with an ear toward the



radio. Another ring brought her shuffling to the inner door. As she pulled open the door the light rushing in stung our darkness. A gruff voice from outside was incomprehensible as the radio preacher's voice rose in a fury Praising The Lord. Our salvation was assured as Mrs. Mays' pink socks glowed in the bright doorway. Praise God! Mrs. Mays began speaking loudly. She seemed confused and upset. Praise God, Praise God! The male voice persisted. Mrs. Mays' layers rose and fell repeatedly in protest. Praise God, Praise God, Praise God! The preachers' competition ceased. The outside intruder's footsteps faded. The door was returned. Amen.

The leader of our group began talking with Mrs. Mays.

"Mrs. Mays, we have come to clean your house, and we are going to begin in this front room. We are going to clean as much as we can today."

We immediately picked objects in the room to dust or scrub. We dusted what furniture we could find. Then, in our boldness, we began emptying her loaded boxes and going through them to remove her collected materials of; evangelist treasures, love letters, used, empty envelopes, Christmas decorations, tennis shoes, stamps, buttons, Bibles, and Sunday sermon leaflets. Material that we deemed useless we casually tossed to a central disposal pile in a clear tile area.

Mrs. Mays steered over to the pile, swayed downward, and came up with handfuls of our rejections. She then slipped through the cloth door and into the second room. After which, she returned to our disposal heap for more handfuls, then repeating her walk to the second room. It became obvious that she did not approve of our attack, and she was capturing her possessions and placing them in a new camp in the second room. This went on for most of the morning prayer service. Then, as the chorus came on, Mrs. Mays ceased her mission between the two rooms. She cleared a small space at the foot of the bed inches from the radio. Then she pried herself up into the hole of emptiness that she had carved and nestled in for the final hymns.

She quietly stared out at us until her gaze was interrupted by a muffled sound in the third room. Her hand turned off the singing. A slow slide brought her to the floor, and she wove out of our sight into the back room. The gruff male voice had returned through the back door. It was now among the huge jars of liquid. We were eager to share our observations with the person of the voice, but we dared not return back there. Angry threats concerning an unpaid water bill followed by denials from Mrs. Mays brought a fearful support on our part for the lady of the house.

A door slammed as the voice left abruptly. Mrs. Mays returned within our vision. Looking rather shaken, her billowing eyebrows hovered in her glasses in wounded retreat. Her bandana had been twisted back revealing a portion of her curly, grayed, and balding head. What hair re-

mained was closely cropped, revealing the moist redness of her scalp.

She seemed to relax more with us as she began walking slowly around the room that we continued to rearrange. Occasionally she would ask us not to touch a book or a plastic vase. The she spied a black, heavy cardboard case that was flaking from age. The case was carefully picked up and craddled by her while she softly stroked its sides. She then, somewhat embarrassingly, looked at each of us. Finally, her hands interwoven in the latches, opened the mysterious case. Ever so carefully she raised a tarnished trombone from its coffin and gazed at it as if she were momentarily suspended behind her glasses in fond remembrance. She began to chuckle and gurgle a little, unconcerned that she had our complete attention. She began to lightly fondle its tubes. It then floated up to her lips, flabby and worn, that slowly enveloped the mouthpiece. The pockets in her face began to unfold and stretch as they were filled with air rising from the depths of her breasts. A long, hollow blast followed. Then the horn was lowered back into the bottom of its tomb while Mrs. Mays resumed her faint laughter and gurgling. The closing of the latches brought us back to our work.

Several of us began cleaning the treadle and wheels of the sewing machine. This immediately caught Mrs. Mays' attention, and her noises ceased. She slid the case back in its resting place and cautiously moved closer to the machine. After its initial cleaning during occasional groans from its wheels, further investigation showed its uselessness. The main cord had frayed and finally given way so that it dragged beneath the wheel that it was to encase. We thought that we could repair it and, we gave the news to Mrs. Mays. She immediately entered our circle around the machine. While we placed the cord on the floor to mend it she hesitated, but finally reached to the window shade behind the Singer. She raised it slightly to reveal the delicate but well worn golden, floral pattern encircling the body of the metal machine. Her hands began to lower and raise the presser foot. Like an eager auto mechanic she began to toy with each part of her machine. An old green dress served as a dust rag to wipe the needle and bobbin casing. Soon she had wiped all of the lighted surfaces and glanced down at our efforts.

We had sewn the two ends of the cord together and began winding it around the main wheel. Then we realized that the cord had to be fitted onto the wheel and then sewn together. So we began our repair once again. Mrs. Mays seemed momentarily disappointed, but her overall excitement at the prospect of using her machine surfaced over her worry. Finally we believed that the cord was fastened on properly. A faint twinkle in Mrs. Mays' good eye matched the glow in the retired one. She sat before the Singer and pressed firmly on the treadle below. The wheels slowly turned and her rubber soles forced more in a rhythmic pumping of the treadle. The momentum was instantly halted. The mended area of the cord had lodged

itself in a groove in the wooded base of the machine. After several attempts to release the cord it quickly frayed and fell below the pink socks and treadle.

Several girls decided that it was time to break for lunch. Although some of us wished to continue in our efforts to successfully mend the machine we were prodded by the others to stop. Mrs. Mays did not stop her tinkering with the needle and hand wheel. She began humming quietly while moving the wheel forward and back again. Occasionally she would pick at the teeth under the needle perhaps hoping to pry loose some dust particle or clogging cloth. The cord remained at her feet.

We found our paper sacks and thermoses from under our beginning pile of cleaning supplies. We settled in a semi-circle to one side of Mrs. Mays. The sandwiches, although warm and tired from their morning wait, were eagerly eaten amid thin whispers. It seemed as if the stillness and closeness of the house had reached within us shutting us up. Our meals were quickly ended with a welcome beverage. Then we returned our focus on Mrs. Mays and the machine. Several of us decided to put all of our efforts together on repairing the treadle cord before we left. The rest moved to begin cleaning in the second room.

Mrs. Mays remained in the driver's seat while we worked around her to remove the cord and examine the groove that it had been lodged in. We reinforced the two frayed ends of the cord with scraps of cloth from the main discard pile in the center of the room. Mrs. Mays seemed to be checking the various knobs to insure a proper take-off. We then placed the cord back over the treadle wheel and up and around the hand wheel. The two ends of the cord were sewn together very tightly so that there would not be a great change in the thickness of the cord in that area. Mrs. Mays gunned the engine, released the presser bar, and began to rhythmically pump the treadle foot. This spun the cord around. We waited. This time the cord easily slipped through over and over. Surprised and happy smiles overcame us. One girl quickly ran to bring the others around the machine. The machine started to hum as Mrs. Mays began steering a piece of cloth under the needle. She smiled.

Everyone was fairly exhausted so we decided to leave early. We gathered our supplies and carried them through both front doors and across the porch. They were placed back safely into their morning beds. The afternoon sun had begun to cast a long, cool shadow across the bright face of the house. After pushing our supplies in we crowded into the car. We sat lightly on the vinyl, sticky and pinching with heat.

For a moment we looked toward the house. In the front, right window the shadow slid across Mrs. Mays, busy pumping, and guiding behind the Singer. Her cheeks rose around her silent smile. The key turned.

Marcia Thomas 1975

### **Empty**

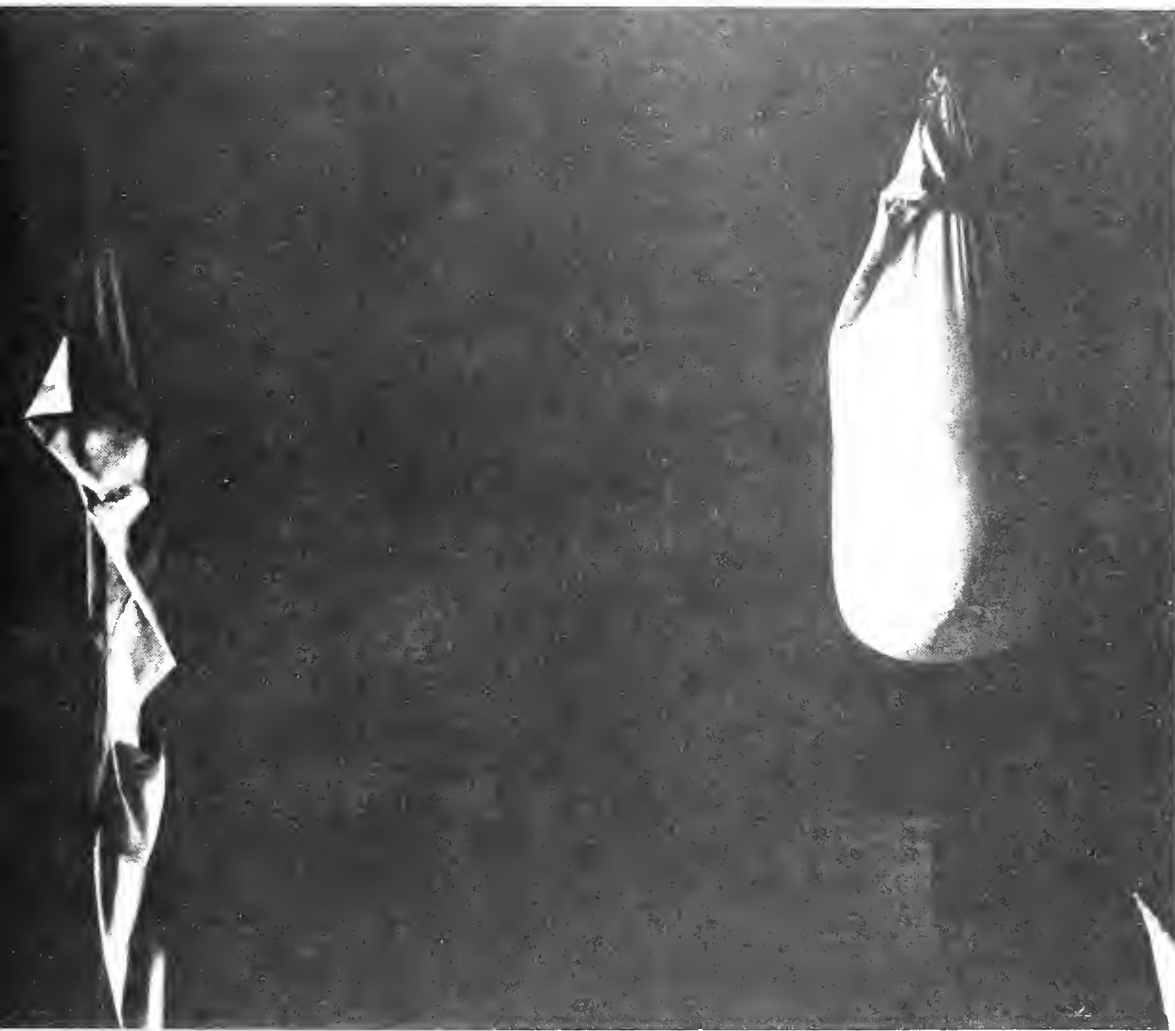
empty park benches, waiting,  
watching other's fun  
simply walking on a sterile path

read everything you can,  
cereal boxes, crap books, cigarette cartons  
you know their warning by heart  
in seven languages

wake at six,  
work til one and break for lunch  
your poetry's bad, your painting worse  
still you hope

don't

Anonymous



Randy Anderson 1975



Davina Davies 1977

## Seeing Double

The mirror does not reflect.  
I reflect that mirror,  
Until I am reflection,  
The thin-as-air,  
Almost not there  
Surface the mirror paints upon.  
What beast, gold and glorious,  
With clarions and claws, watches me,  
Unseen beyond the mirror?  
Its music becomes, in my voice,  
The words of smaller talk,  
Words of information, timetable tabulation.  
There is no lion's roar  
In "shut the door.  
It is too cold.  
It is too hot.  
What is it we were talking about?"  
What is so real it must be tempered in a mirror,  
As light is broken  
In a prism?  
What beast am I the splinter of,  
The mirror-image?

Kathy Sue Orr 1975

## **A Return to Barney's Joy**

Sherry Buttick 1976

You were lying, turned away,  
Curled like an animal  
Protecting its wound.

Before, the flood waters  
Had been rising;  
They had transfixed you already:  
Eddies enveloped your ankles;

But we took the hounds hunting,  
Put a good fox to ground  
On Barney's Joy Point.

The sheets were twisted  
And wrung into wrinkles.  
You asked for the bottle;  
I tried to explain,

But you were swept away  
To a land where it always was winter,  
So nothing I said could pertain.  
You were standing beside  
A dark river,  
Begging not to be taken across.

I wanted to make you remember  
The afternoons after hunting  
We had drunk off the cold  
And played the guitar  
While rows of boots  
Dripped slush in the hall.

From somewhere downstream  
You sent me a message



To cremate the corpse  
You were leaving behind:

You said that there  
It always was snowing  
And the wind off the river  
Was knife-like.

You were sure  
The warmth from the fire  
Would crawl down the river  
Into its blankets of ice.

Even for you  
I could not burn up the body:  
I poured the bourbon  
Into the sink,  
Handed you a glass of milk.

The hand which was clutched  
(its frantic shaking!)  
Around wads of sheet  
Started to reach for the glass,  
Then lost all its interest  
And dropped on the mattress.

I do not know how that winter broke,  
Nothing I know could pertain, but

Today for the first time in years  
We put the hounds in the Bronco  
And go down to hunt Barney's Joy.  
You say we've had some rough times.  
A hound leans over the seat  
And pokes her nose into our lunch.

We run a red fox for hours;  
The mud-thaw of spring has begun  
And her sweetness is oozing into the air.

## **The Rocker**

Old woman sitting in your rocker,  
dozing  
Little do you know  
that I am watching,  
composing.

Surveying your lined face  
I look for a trace  
of girlhood grace.  
Now, you lift your soft  
but knobby hand  
and brush the fly  
from your lips.  
Did you once have marital bliss?

Are you reminiscing in this summer slumber  
of things gone by  
Or do those creased and puffy lids  
dwell in the land of age,  
where passion and love  
relinquish themselves  
to aches and pains  
(Oh, it's going to rain).

In your oscillating condition  
you look appeased.  
Your white hair in a severe bun  
Your dress at your knees.

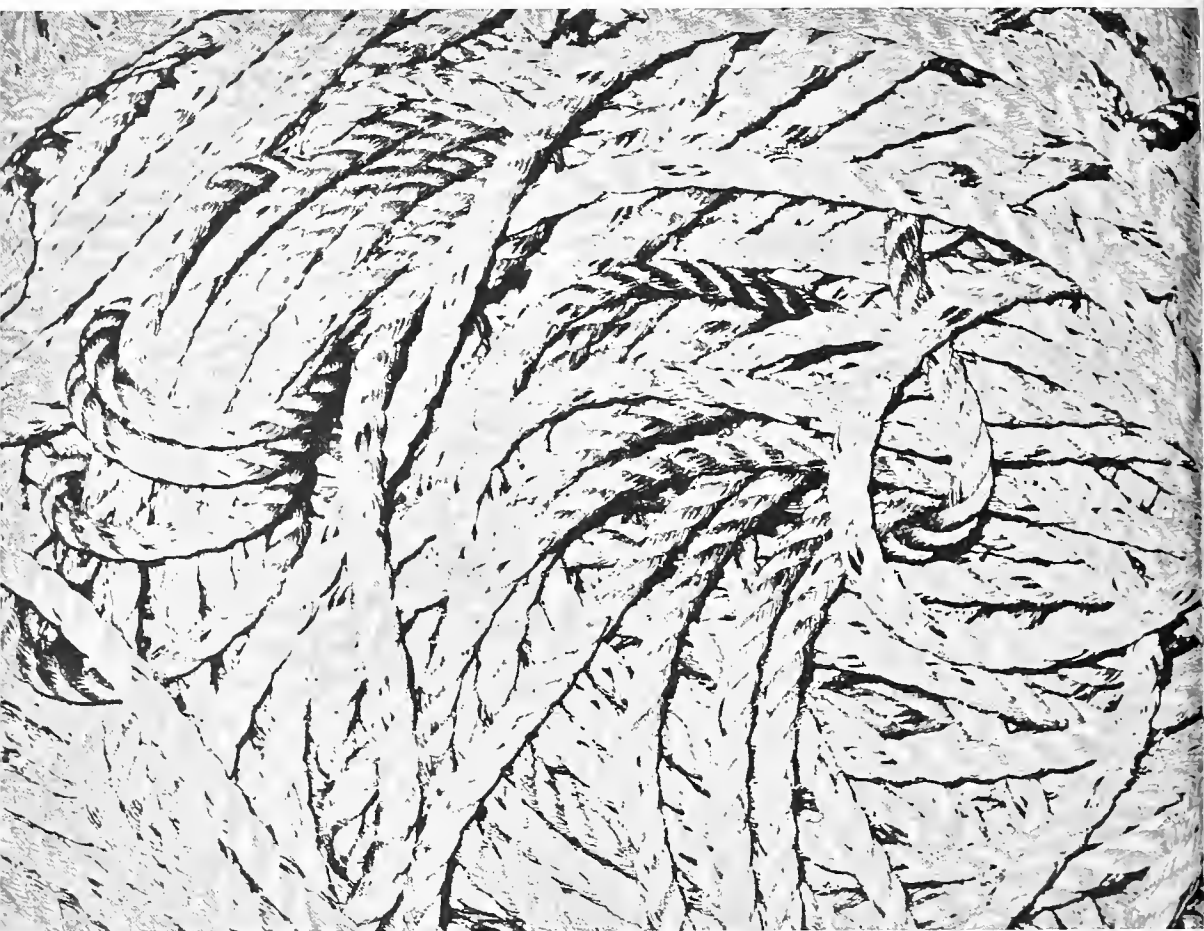
Old woman  
did you break hearts  
or were you the victim?  
Did you vote for Nixon?

You look so sweet,  
I bet you were cheap.  
You can't fool me  
I own a rocker too.

Marybeth Connor 1975



Allyson Wilmer 1976



Shari Mendelson 19

## Poem to My Married Would-be Lover

It isn't to me  
a moral dilemma  
(I never was a church member).  
Accustomed as I am to the amorality of art,  
it's a problem of ethics: to hurt  
or not to hurt or not to be hurt  
Myself. That is the question and I should say  
No. But lest you mistake  
my resolution for strength my intelligence for wisdom  
I shall confess: my flesh is frail. If I were wholly  
selfless sexless spiritual smart I would not want  
    Your tenderness I would not want  
    Your wanting me I would not want  
    You. So I deny my desires, knowing  
Tenderness is not lightly taken; each futile touch  
is a cruel laceration upon both our feelings. I cannot consent  
to that hell I care too much for us both

Anonymous 1975

Words  
have their time and place  
in this passing.

Words  
linger upon the mind  
again, again. Drawing me back  
into days of  
    candyandcrackers  
    iced glasses of milk  
    salty stories  
Learned to whistle 'n climb trees  
Made the best spit wad you'd ever see  
    (got Mr. Thompson right in the eye)  
Eddie & I would go fishing up the river  
    barefoot and easy  
    no one around to keep us neat & tidy  
    time for a smoke  
Eddie & I would rap about things  
    marbles  
    boats  
    and how to scare Susie Cox  
Blue jeans felt good  
I had a favorite pair of tennis shoes  
a few spots of grease, holes for effect  
(the black lab had chewed on them once)  
Saturdays were special  
that meant  
    soda pop and baseball games  
for ten cents you could buy a dog with mustard.  
Root for the home team  
    and give the rhubarb to the other guys  
At night you could go to the flicks  
    see George Raft or Jimmy Cagney  
    or We'd sit glued to the radio

sometimes it would be the Lone Ranger or  
Fibber MaGee and Molly  
'Course occasionally we'd have to hit the books  
Can't say I liked that too much.  
More often you'd see me  
playing hookey  
    Book learning doesn't make a man out of you  
    Why I never got to the high fourth  
    Well I did go to Harvard but that doesn't  
        mean much  
No, I'd rather be a kid again  
    lazy  
    maybe down by the river chewing some sour grass.

Beth Reeves 1976

Elizabeth Farmer 19



## **Space for a Poem**

How much room does a poem need?  
Sculpture carves itself of air and rock,  
The substance of what it is not,  
Until there is something that it is.  
Its name surfaces  
From the identities it has shed,  
Skin by skin  
Unwrapped, ripped and cleft  
In unrelenting dismemberment,  
Until there remains something left.  
Sculpture stays  
Earthbound.  
But when a poem moves  
To greener places,  
The space it occupied is empty.  
Not for rent.

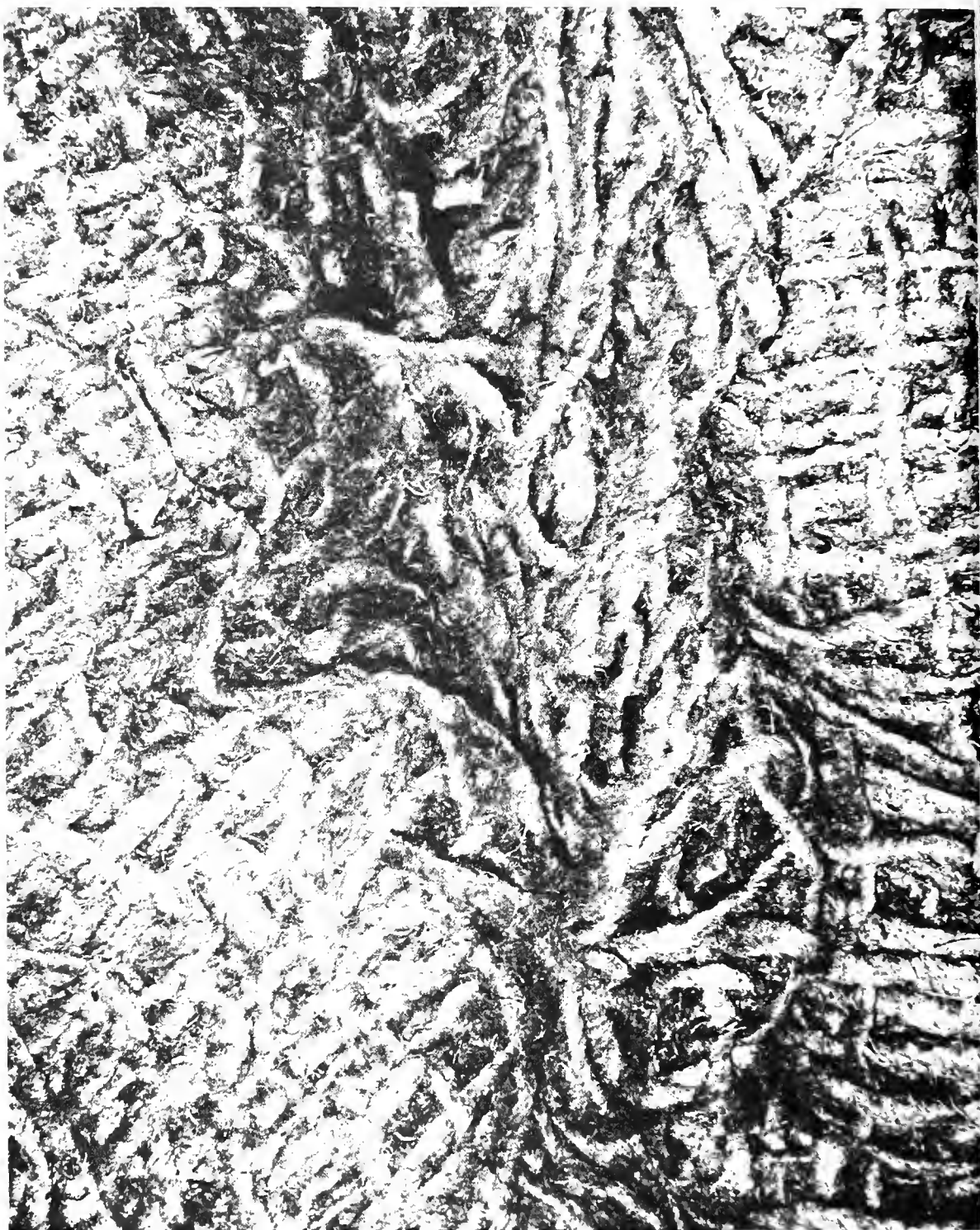
Kathy Sue Orr 1975

## Excavation

1. My tools, pick and spade,  
weapons for the sacking  
of a known Atlantis:  
I, the grave robber, have come  
to explore, to spade this earth.  
No lost civilisation awaits my intrusion,  
secure and separate in its isolation,  
quite preserved.
2. Under a vast heaviness,  
through earth like black bedrock  
I dredge, I invade.  
The descent is gradual, tedious,  
as layer upon layer upon layer  
is sheared away: clay, then sand,  
deeper still the darker loam beneath.  
Yet I am patient; I have prepared carefully.  
I know what the earth knows:  
to endure is to elude.
3. Old burrows of subterranean creatures—  
of moles and snakes, decaying tree roots,  
hibernating beetles, glowstones:  
unwanted finds, roughly slung away  
as debris for the dumping ground.  
I excavate artefacts;  
the curious mementos my own artless hands discover  
are things wrought by another's  
unknown skill.  
And yet the light violates what  
I cause to be revealed.

4. These relics: an ivory amulet,  
electrum death mask, a golden hairpin—  
I wrench the long-lived ikons  
from their deep sanctum.  
A bronze mirror, silver handled,  
reflects my image  
after so many years.  
A cinerary urn of cremated ashes—  
all, all tokens to be shown at gates,  
at points of departure:  
a passport out.
5. In this vast pit lies my past—  
a depository of carefully hoarded trinkets.  
(I taste the fisted dirt that covers me.  
I feel its weight collapse me.  
I know the pleasure of ruins.)

clarissanielsen 1977



Shari Mendelson 1975

## **The Perversity of a Vending Machine Paper Cup**

There is something perverse  
about being thanked by a paper cup  
for pushing the button  
that sent it bobsledding down the aluminum shoot  
seconds before crushed ice and syrup.

I have never thanked my mother  
for devoting nine months of her time  
to my procreation;  
not to mention my father.

To make it worse,  
the words on the side of the cup  
are distorted into the shape of a heart:  
the letters twist around the organ  
like veins—how perverse.

I would hardly know who to thank  
for my own vascular system.  
I go for weeks without my  
aorta even crossing my mind.

Sherry Buttrick 1976

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Spring 1976

Sweet Briar College  
Sweet Briar, Virginia

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This poem won first prize in the 1976 Christie Anne Scordas Poetry Contest

### **Sharing a Taxi**

We meet on the sidewalk squares  
Like two chess pieces in checkmate.  
She sweeps by me, first  
Inside the dimly lighted cab  
With her paper and good legs.  
I follow, like an uninvited  
Funeral guest, wincing in the effort  
Of pulling the door handle  
To me, obliterating  
The cab light.  
Our rear-view mirror driver  
Checks traffic and our faces;  
The cold does not leave my hands.  
I sense a correspondence in this dark.  
His hands grip the wheel;  
Mine grip each other,  
And somewhere beneath us  
An engine drones like all  
The breathings of my past,  
Time-lapsed.  
The woman's perfume fills me like helium  
In the controlled climate of metered air  
And studied hand. I wish for a radio  
To drown this metering, this vacuum  
Where I have lost my sense of smell.  
The patterns of night, headlights  
On high beam, caress our driver's body.  
Then surge over the woman and me  
Like shrouds, leaving darkness  
And coldness of hand.

clarissanielsen 1977



This poem won second prize in the 1976 Christie Anne Scordas Poetry Contest

### **Chris the Cool Boy**

Chris wore tight levis, and his family they  
let him play boss man at the dinner table.  
Most nights he would strut out, fire in his gut  
for some sleeze queen poolhall. With a packa  
camels rolled up his shoulder sleeve, he'd  
walk on in like some cocky redneck farmer  
treading well worked earth. Poolballs would  
catch the reflection of his eye,  
and shoot his fiery look at every hustler  
on the floor. The way them son-of-a-bitches eyed him,  
you knew he was good. And the ladies  
in their tight red dresses, sipping gin & tonics  
and leaning on the wall, you can be sure they watched  
every move their smooth boy made. Not to say  
they never got under his skin,  
I'd say for sure them red-dressed women  
warpathed through his dreams.  
Yeah, and Chris would shoot them cue balls  
all night long, playing any panama hat stranger  
for a cigarette or a song.

One night I seen a girl come across the floor,  
she put a rose down on his game. He thought he  
had it made, tryed to grab her hand but  
she was out the door and on the street  
before he could calculate his angle. There was  
a small time crime fifteen year old  
blowing lucky strikes in the corner, he said,  
"By now that babes rocking in the backseat of  
someones Ford." He grinned and poured another

draft down his baby white throat. "Green ass,"  
the bartender he said, spitting into the counter  
cloth. With his back turned from the drunks,  
he'd watch for Chris-the-cool-boy to make  
another shot. And he muttered under his breath,  
"They all come down some time, walk through the door  
one night, no more fire in their eyes.  
Yeah, they all git down one day,  
I seen this cartoon before.

On a cycle going fifty one night, Chris beat on  
a brick wall with his brain. The beer drunk it  
fell off quickly and onto the asphalt in so  
many jagged pieces of broken mirror. The glass  
it ripped his black leather, like cows split down  
the belly in their pastures, late at night.  
They took him up the road in a White Rose ambulance.

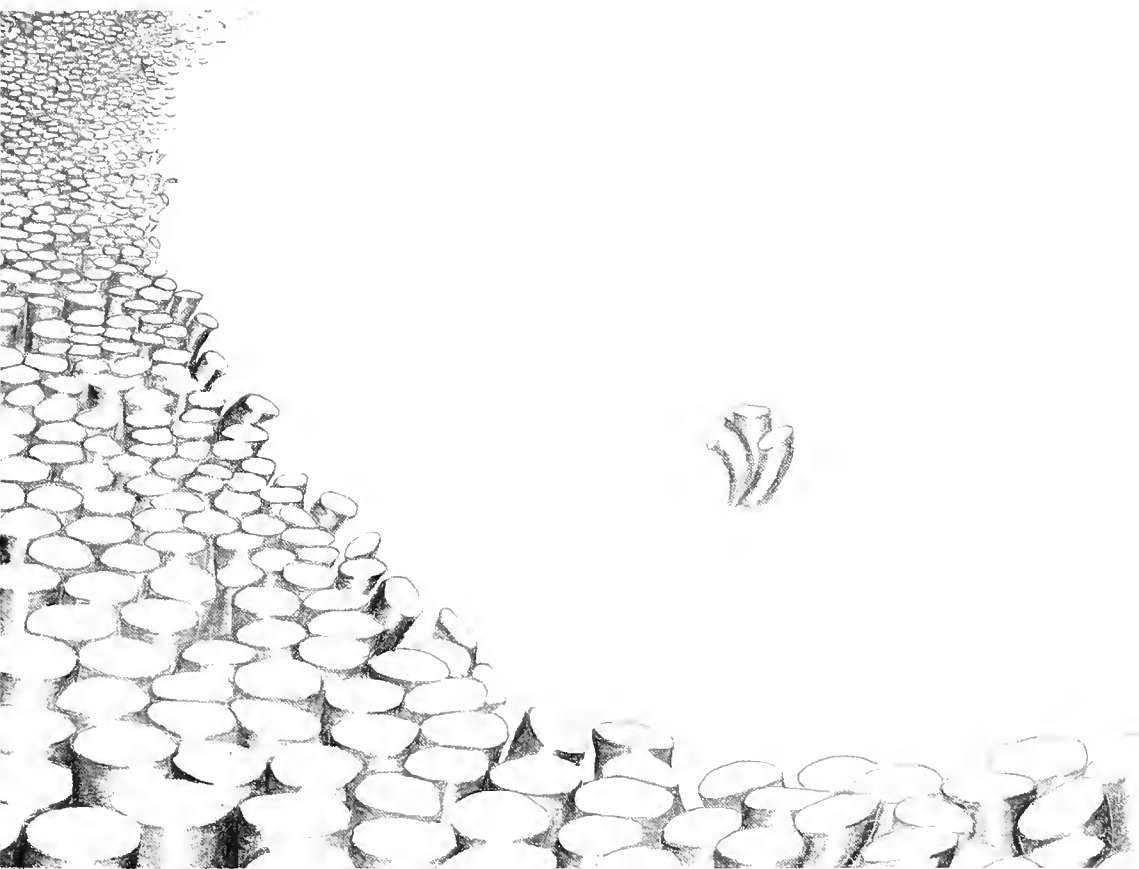
Cathy Calello 1979

This poem won third prize in the 1976 Christie Anne Scordas Poetry Contest

One too many  
Temper Tantrums.  
Flew to my room,  
Locked my door  
Panted and pushed my bureau  
To secure  
My  
Isolation.  
And Dammit if Daddy didn't  
Take my door off its hinges and  
Lock it away  
And for the twenty-four hours  
Without my door  
I felt just naked.

Lisa Hagan 1979





Kim Wiese



## Satin Sheets

A silent, young couple walked out of McDonald's into the parking lot. The boy opened the car door for the girl who slid over into the driver's seat to unlock the other door. The car moved into the deserted intersection. Bobby Gallagher stopped the car at the red light even though there was not another car to be seen for miles. He sighed deeply. His girlfriend, Carol Evans, looked up at him from under the arm draped across her shoulders.

"Well, what's the matter now?" she asked.

"I just don't know where to start," he said. "I've never done this kind of thing before."

"You think I have?" Carol asked.

"No, of course not. I didn't mean that. It's just--"

"It's just what? Oh come on! We write letters every day while I'm away at school and make all these big plans for Thanksgiving vacation and now when I come over 300 miles to see you, it's all going to be a flop!" she said, crossing her arms.

"Carol, it's not going to be a flop! I just wanted to know if you had any suggestions about what I should do. That's all."

"Ok., then. I suggest we start at the ones nearest the beach and take it from there," Carol said.

"All right, we'll do just that," Bobby said and turned the car in the opposite direction. They drove onto a wide street called Ocean Drive. The car poked along, passing boutiques, stores, restaurants, and hotels. Most had black-and-white signs posted in their windows saying "Closed for the Season." Between the buildings patches of the beach and ocean peeked through.

"Sure is quiet around here this time of year," Bobby said.

"Yeah. It's amazing how things can change in only a few months."

Bobby glanced at her and grinned. "You're not kidding." Carol looked out the window. All the pools in the front of the hotels were empty, and the pastel-colored walls were chipped and peeling. The sun was hidden behind clouds and all the summer houses blended in with the monotonous gray of the sky, sand, and sea. Occasionally they passed a motel with an orange "Vacancy" sign. A black mutt dashed across the street in front of them. Bobby jammed on the brakes.

"Hold on," he said, grabbing her shoulder, and then he gradually picked up speed again.

"Are we going to keep driving all day?" Carol asked.

"No, but I haven't seen any place where we could have stopped yet," Bobby replied.

"Hell, Bobby, we've passed about five vacancy signs already," Carol said.

"Well, then, why didn't you say something?"

"I thought you saw them."

"Obviously I didn't."

"Ok. Next time I'll tell you," she said. "All right, stop! There!" Carol pointed to the Crosswinds Motel. Bobby pulled to the side of the road and turned off the motor.

"You want to try there?" he asked.

"Why not?"

"It looks too expensive."

"It won't be with the winter rates. Besides, I've always wanted to go in there."

"Ok., if you say so," Bobby said, getting out of the car and holding his hand out to Carol. "Let's go."

"I'm not going in," she said.

"What do you mean you're not going in? We came all this way just so I could get a room all for myself!"

"No, no, silly. You go in and register the room in your name and come back for me later. Then I'll sneak in. I'm not going in with you now—they'll give me funny looks. They'll know I'm too young to be your wife."

"Why didn't you say so before? I just assumed you'd go in with me. I didn't know I'd have to do it all by myself."

"Oh, you're making such a big deal out of this! It's not hard. Will you just go in and get the damn room and stop acting like a baby!"

"What reason should I give?"

"You don't have to give them a reason. It's none of their business."

"Ok. Ok. Sit here and don't talk to any strangers. I'll be right back."

Bobby slammed the door and ran across the street. He walked through a glass door with a printed "Welcome" sign and disappeared. Carol turned the key left in the ignition to the battery and flicked on the radio. She did not listen to the music crackling with static. She stared at the shinny glass-and-chrome motel and drummed her fingers on the steering wheel. She leaned forward in the seat to look in the mirror and fix her hair.

Bobby walked across the blue tiled floor to the counter where an old man was reading a newspaper. The man wore a neat and conservative suit and greeted Bobby cheerfully.

"What can I do for you, son?" he asked, folding his newspaper and putting it under the counter.

"Well, let's see, could you please tell me how much your rooms are?" Bobby asked. He shoved his hands in the pockets of his jacket and shifted his feet.

The man took off his glasses and, wiping them, said, "Eighteen dollars

for an ocean front single; sixteen dollars for a single in the back; twenty-two dollars for an ocean front double and twenty dollars for a double in the back." He rested his glasses on his nose.

"Oh," Bobby said. "That's-"

The old man cut him off. "Now, is this for one or two?" he asked, leaning on his elbows. He had stopped smiling and gazed steadily into Bobby's eyes.

"For one."

"That's good, because this is a respectable business establishment. I don't want any funny business going on. Now what's your name? He pushed the clean, black page of the register and a pen in front of Bobby.

"Sir, I don't think I'll be needing a room, thank you. The prices are a little too steep for me," Bobby said calmly. He turned and walked away.

"Well, you should have said so in the first place," the man grumbled. He picked up his newspaper and sat down in his chair.

Bobby hopped into the car. "You're going to wear down the battery doing that," he said, turning off the radio. "Dad will kill me if anything goes wrong with the car."

"Did you get it? Bobby? What happened?"

Bobby started the car and lurched into the street. "Let's just get out of here," he answered. "Gosh, I felt like a criminal or something!"

"Will you please tell me what happened," Carol demanded.

After Bobby had told her what had happened, they decided to try the motels further away from the ocean. Carol jotted down the names of the places with vacancies.

"We've got three now. That's enough," Bobby said, stopping the car by a curb with a phone booth. "Got any change? I only have twenty cents."

"Yes, here," she said, handing him her wallet. "Good luck."

Bobby went into the phone booth and looked up the three names in the phone book. He scribbled the numbers on the wall and then dialed each one. He left the phone booth shaking his head. "Not very good luck," he said, sliding next to Carol. "The first one didn't answer, the second one was all booked up, and the third was fifteen dollars a night. I asked the last guy if all the rooms on the island were that much and he said yes."

"Great, and we've got twelve dollars to spare?"

"Thirteen and we can still make it to the Captain's Table for dinner."

"Well, what are we going to do? Bag it after we've looked forward to being alone for so long?"

"No, that last guy also said to try just over the Tenth Street Bridge in Mason's Point on the mainland. He thought they'd be cheaper there."

"Ok. Let's try there if you want," she said resignedly. She leaned back

against Bobby's arm and got comfortable. As they drove away, she memorized the barren boardwalk and the silent amusement deck covered with dull green canvas. It reminded her of a game her mother played with her when she was a little girl. "Here's the church, there's the steeple," she had said, folding her hands together and pointing her two index fingers. "Open the doors—now where are all the people?" When her mother spread her thumbs apart, the insides of her hands were empty. Yes, where were all the people?

Carol loved the way the place felt. She took one last glimpse of the white-capped ocean as they turned the corner. When they approached the bridge, she said, "I hate to leave this place. It's sad to think that the next time I see it all the people will be here."

"Well, there sure isn't much to see now anyway," Bobby replied, staring ahead to the other side of the bridge.

Carol studied the choppy waves of the bay below her. Screaming seagulls swooped down in the mist. She remembered throwing pieces of bread to the seagulls last summer on the beach with her little brother. It was hard getting used to being away from him this first year at college. He was growing up so fast and she was missing it all.

"Carol, do you know it's already three o'clock?" Bobby asked.

"So."

"So, do you think it's going to be worth getting a room?"

"Do you?"

"Well, if we eat at six, that's only a couple of hours."

"Isn't that enough time?"

"Of course," he said, blushing slightly.

"Even though you're paying for a full night?"

"Just being alone with you for a few minutes is worth it."

"But if you'd rather—"

"No, I'm pulling right over here." They had crossed the bridge and entered Mason's Point. Bobby parked the car on the side of the street, about half a block away from the motel. "This is the good kind of motel that has all the individual houses. That way you'll be able to get in easier. Ok?" he said cheerfully.

"Fine with me," she answered, "I'm just getting sick of driving."

"I'll go in there and get us a cozy room in a flash, don't worry." He squeezed her hand and jumped out.

Carol surveyed the Piney-Hollow Motel. The wind blew and she shuddered, pulling the collar of her coat around her neck. Crossing over to the mainland was like plopping into the middle of a forest. Giant evergreens grew in tightly packed clumps. It was so shady it seemed like night time. Take off for a day at the shore and we end up staying on the mainland. Well, all we

really wanted was a motel room. It's been so long. Two and a half months.

Bobby scared her when he opened the door. "What are you so pensive about?" he asked, giving her a nudge. "The lady in there was really nice. Their rooms were thirteen dollars a night for a single, but that's with a color T.V. She said across the street at the Ocean Mist Motel, though, it's only eleven dollars cause they have black and white T.V.'s."

"Who cares about a T.V.?"

"Good. That's what I hoped you'd say. We didn't come all this way to watch T.V." he said smiling.

"Start the car," Carol said solemnly. Bobby quickly turned the key and drove across the street.

"Ok. This time I'm gonna pull in front of the office, so you'll have to duck down under the seat. When I come back, stay down till I say the coast is clear."

"Gotcha," she said. Bobby walked towards the office but glanced back at the car before opening the door.

"Hello, young man. What can I do for you?" a white haired lady asked. She was sitting in an easy chair, knitting what seemed to be a sweater. She did not lift her eyes from her work.

"The lady across the street said you have single rooms for eleven dollars a night," Bobby said confidently.

"Yes, I do," the lady said, rising abruptly and walking behind the desk. "Do you want a room" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, please."

"By yourself?" she asked, raising her eyebrows. She checked Bobby over for every detail.

"Yes, m'am," he replied.

"Well, that will be eleven dollars in advance." She got out the register and then handed him a pen. "Under your name, write your address." Bobby signed his name but hesitated before writing his address. What if something happens? What if Dad finds out? Or worse yet, what if Carol's dad finds out?

"I'd like to see your driver's license, please, when you're finished."

Bobby quickly added his address and then produced his license.

"Ok." she said, glancing at the register and handing back his card. "You're in room ten, over in the middle there. And there's your key. Check out time is 11:00 A.M. If you're not out by then, it's another eleven dollars."

"Thanks a lot, m'am. Goodbye." Bobby almost skipped to the car. "Don't get up now, but I got it! I got the room!" he said, leaning over her.

"Oh, that's nice," Carol said, still staring at the floor. She wondered how long those Juicy Fruit wrappers had been under the seat. Among the dust were also a chewed lollipop stick, a ball game ticket, and a balled up Burger King

bag. She flicked aside a silver wrapper and saw a penny. "Hey, I found a penny!" she said, "Doesn't that mean good luck?"

"We don't need it now cause we're home free!"

"I guess we are," she said quietly.

Bobby drove the car hundred feet to their room. "Ok. Stay low. I'll bring the suitcase in and unlock the door, then I'll tell you to come when it's all clear."

"Right. Just make sure no one's watching." Bobby got out and, looking all around, quickly pulled the suitcase out of the back seat. He unlocked the door to the room and switched on the overhead light. Not bad, he thought. He put the suitcase on the bed and jumped beside it. "Pretty comfortable," he said, bouncing up and down a few times. He left the room, studying the area outside, then tapped on the car window and went inside.

Carol poked up her head. As if waking from a dream, she glanced at everything around her. She saw a row of identical rooms, connected in two's. The rooms were built like little houses and were made of shingled wood, topped with red, triangular, metal roofs. They were painted in varying shades of white. Number ten's paint was lined with rust-stained streaks. Each house had two green-gray jalousie windows and a blue "welcome" mat. Carol opened the door without turning her head and dashed into the open doorway. Bobby slammed the door.

"We did it! We did it!" he said, hugging her.

"Let me take a look at this place," Carol said, pulling away. She walked across the room, turning on the lamp on the bureau. It did not light. She tried the one on the night table. It worked. "That's a little better. Turn off that damn overhead light," she said, taking off her coat and throwing it on a chair. One whole wall was mirrored and she could not help taking a look at herself to fix her hair. There was a brisk, light tap on the door. "What's that?" Carol whispered.

"Someone's at the door," Bobby answered.

"No, there couldn't be." They heard the knock again, but this time it was louder.

"Open up," a voice ordered.

"It's the landlady! Quick, get in the bathroom!" Bobby said softly. "And don't make a sound." "I'm coming, I'm coming. Just a minute," he called. Carol darted into the bathroom.

Opening the door, Bobby saw the plump, white haired lady clutching a shawl.

"Let me in," she said, briskly walking into the room.

"What's the trouble, m'am?" Bobby asked.

"You know what the trouble is, young man," she replied. "This is a single room."



"Yes, but—"

"Yes, but you have two people in here."

"Well, I don't—"

"So you owe me four more dollars."

"I only have two more."

"Well, let's see now," she said, pursing her lips, "I guess that will have to do. Hand it over." She held out her wrinkled, veiny hand.

Bobby checked his jacket pockets and then his jeans for his wallet. He opened it up and took out the two bills. "Here."

"Thank you," she said, stepping out the door. "And enjoy yourselves," she added with a small grin.

Bobby closed the door and leaning against it, said, "Whew! We will now." He knocked on the bathroom door. "You can come out now, Carol."

"Oh I like it in here."

"What?"

"With these pink, broken tiles and the faded flamingoes on the shower curtain and the dead moths stuck in the light and—"

"Carol, will you please open the door," Bobby said patiently.

"You should see it! Oh, and the floor—it's a lovely shade of cement."

"Carol, will you cut it out," Bobby said, raising his voice and jiggling the door knob. "Come on now!"

"And do you know the ceiling has the most interesting cracks?"

"Carol, damn it! I'm going to count to ten!"

"And then what? You'll break the door down?"

"No. But come on. Stop the funny business. We're finally alone."

"To do what?"

"Carol, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. It's just such a thrilling place. The medicine cabinet won't open, but they do supply you with lots of towels."

"Carol, are you mad at me?"

"No, I'm just kidding around. Ok., I'll come out." She slowly opened the door, then plopped on the bed. "Well, here we are," she said, staring at the ceiling.

"You scared me there for a minute," Bobby said, sitting beside her. He put his arm around her shoulders.

"I wonder what's on T.V.?" she said, switching on the set. "Hey, look at the air conditioner."

"I don't think we need any more cool air," Bobby said with a grimace.

"Of course not. But it has a heating system too. We could use a little more heat, don't you think?" Carol pushed the button and the droning sound competed with the voices on the T.V. set. "Let's see what we have here—an

ice bucket! Oh, please get me some ice. I could really use some ice water."

"What is your problem?" Bobby shouted, jumping up from the bed.

"I just want some ice water."

"You sure don't need it. Give me the damn bucket!" Bobby grabbed it from her hand and stomped out through the door. When he returned, Carol was sitting on the edge of the bed, intently watching a "Three Stooges" movie. "The machine doesn't work," he said, throwing the styrofoam bucket on the bureau.

"That's Ok," she said, still gazing at the show.

"You're welcome," Bobby said and clicked off the T.V.

"Hey, I was watching that!"

"We didn't come down here to watch T.V., remember, Carol? And you know it. Now, I don't know what the trouble is, but I think we have some serious talking to do. Now start," Bobby sat down beside her.

"Nothing's the matter, really."

"In the two years we've been going out, you've never acted like this before."

"I'm sorry. I'm just a little tired, I guess."

"Are you sure that's all?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"These two and a half months have been so rough without you."

"They've been rough for me too."

"It's hard to believe we're finally together, and all alone. Why'd you pick that damn school anyway?"

"I didn't get into any of the others, remember?"

"You got into one other."

"Well, I'd have to live at home. No way." She paused. "What are we talking about this for, anyway? We've been through it so many times before. It's stupid!"

"All right, all right. Take it easy."

Carol crossed her legs and started swinging them. "I wonder how many people have sat on this same bed?"

"What?"

"How many people have sat here and what they were like and where they came from and you know, all that."

"What difference does it make?"

"None. I was just thinking."

"Well, think about us," Bobby leaned over and kissed her. Gently holding her shoulders, he pushed her down on the bed. "I've waited so long to be with you, baby." He kissed her for a long time. Carol's body was limp.

Bobby turned on his side. "What is bugging you? You feel like a dead

fish!" he said.

"I don't know."

"If you knew how frustrating you are!"

"Sorry."

"It was your damn idea in the first place!"

Carol closed her eyes. Bobby sat next to her.

"Listen. Whose letter was it that suggested renting a motel room? Who said she wanted something to prove we loved each other even though we were so far apart? You!"

"I realize that. It's just, well, I didn't think it would turn out this way."

"What do you mean? What do you expect for eleven, well, thirteen dollars?"

"I know, Bobby. We can't expect the height of luxury." She looked down. "I guess I was too wrapped up in my dream of a bright, sunny room with a balcony overlooking the ocean, satin sheets, and champagne afterwards. But all we got was the Ocean Mist."

Bobby nodded his head.

"Now I'm just not-"

"You're not what?"

"I'm not in the mood."

"Oh." Bobby turned away.

"I'm sorry."

"No. Don't be."

She laid her hand on his arm. "Don't be mad at me."

"I'm not. I guess this place is starting to get to me too."

"What do you want to do?"

"How 'bout is I take you to dinner earlier."

"Do you mind?"

"No."

"Thanks for understanding." Carol wrapped her arms around Bobby's neck and kissed him.

"Too bad we can't get our money back," he said. "But I never want to see that lady again."

They changed their clothes for dinner. "I see what you mean about those interesting cracks in the ceiling," Bobby called from the bathroom.

"Don't you love them?" she said. "I think I'm gonna ask Dad to put some in my bathroom at home."

"So you'll have something to remember this place by?"

"Sure, that's it!"

They gathered their clothes together and packed the suitcase. After checking the room for anything left behind, Bobby said, "Well, are we ready to

leave?"

"I hope so. But let me get a couple bars of soap."

"Why would you want a souvenir of this dump?"

"Just because . . . I can't explain it."

They took a final look at the room and left.



Ann Stryker

## A Student's Ode to Tennyson

He's read one work of Tennyson,  
Its title: *In Memoriam*.  
He sees he must read twenty others  
And thinks that he would rather smother,  
Drown in quicksand ten times over,  
By an ear be hung from Cliffs of Dover,  
Endure the Chinese water torture,  
A Cuban, August, midday scorcher,  
The rack, the gallows, anything,  
Than wade through *Idylls of the King*.  
Before King Arthur finally passes,  
His eyes are dim, he must get glasses.  
At last when he has grown quite feeble,  
He finds a poem called "The Eagle."  
His joy abounds, he bursts to song:  
The work is only six lines long.

Sherry Buttrick 1976

## **In Memoriam, or, Nous Sommes Tous les Assassins**

Late pedaling up the hill to class  
I saw a dead squirrel by the way;  
I stopped and poked him where he lay;  
His blood was smeared across the grass.

And as I climb the stairs to where  
The sleepy students wait for me,  
I think upon that squirrel and see  
A misery I have to share.

For well I know the little one  
Was scampering blithe across the road  
When smashed to jelly by a load  
Of tired girls, back from Lexington.

What was the motive of their speed?  
Did they race back (as well they ought)  
All panting for the joys of thought,  
Intent the maw of mind to feed?

'Tis likelier far they came to sleep,  
To change their jeans, to drop a course;  
To meet a deadline, groom a horse,  
Finesse a search they find too deep.

But what of that? My guilt is clear;  
I see the means but not the end;  
I flog the old Benz round the bend;  
I miss the squirrel, but hit the deer.

Bradley Headstone



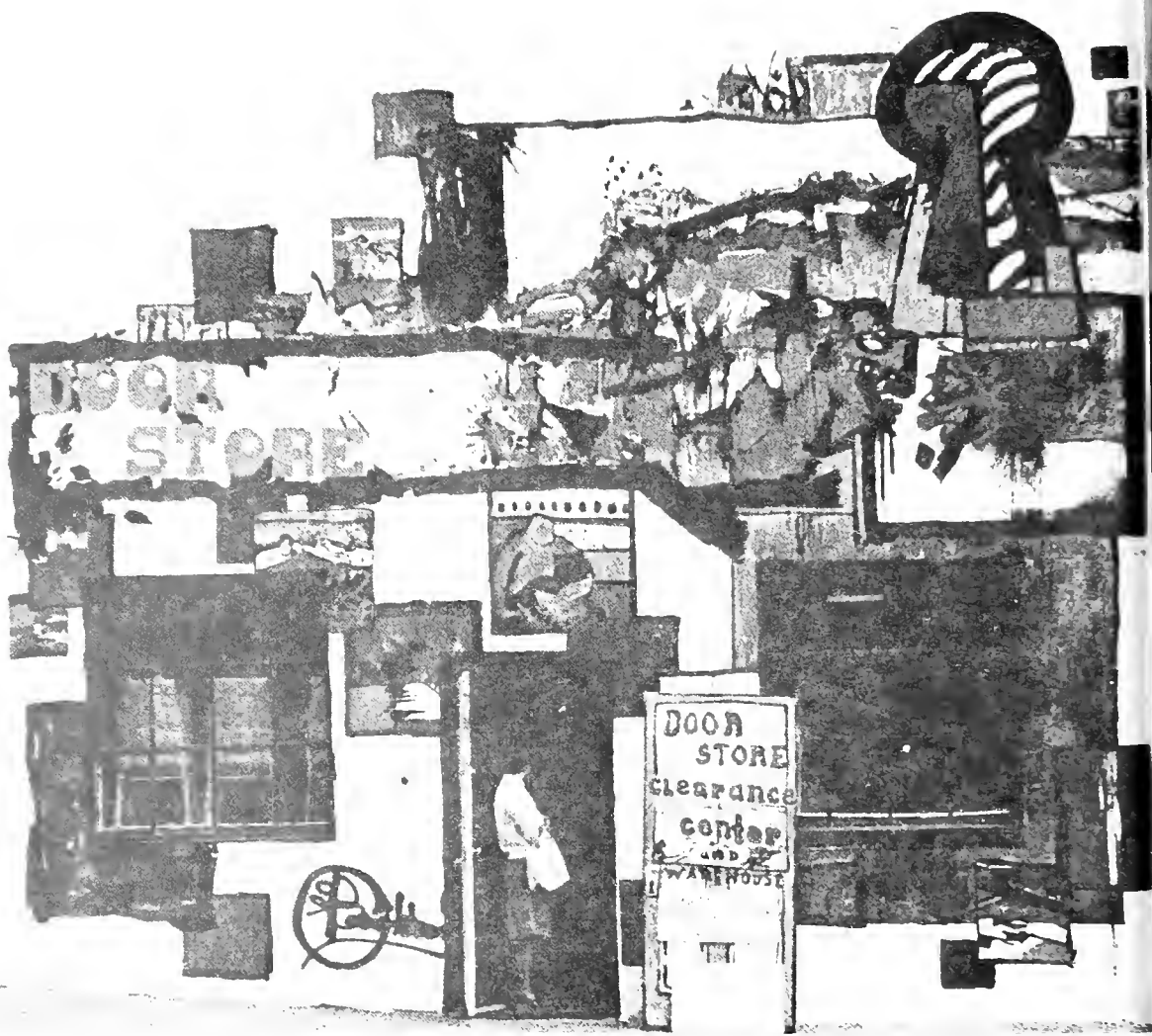
Joannie Dearbo



In the morning light the room lost the coziness that I had noticed the night before. Now it looked cramped and cluttered. Each piece of furniture seemed to fight for its place on the carpet (which was a threadbare oriental). The closet had no door, and all that hung in it was a man's suit and some shirts, and a lot of empty hangers. The wallpaper was ivory with pink stripes. If you looked closely you could see that the stripes were made up of tiny flowers. On the wall hung a phone and on the ivory wallpaper were scribbled a dozen phon numbers, some scratched out. There was a British hunting print that hung over the bed. It had no glass in the frame to protect it, so it had yellowed. Piled on the floor in a careless way were my clothes and purse. My shoes stood together, toes precisely lined up. His clothes were wadded up in a bundle on his bureau. His sneakers sat on top of it all, King and Queen of a hill of lanudry. They looked precariously perched, and I was sure the Queen would topple from her throne. Next to me lay a sheet clad figure. His face was turned from mine and buried in a wave of white percale. No matter how I tried, I couldn't remember what color his eyes were. He had a headful of light brown curls, (what I had thought so attractive) so perhaps his eyes wer hazel. It didn't really matter.

He didn't rouse as I slipped out of bed. I pulled my wrinkled dress on over my head and belted it around my waist. My pantyhose had a run, so I threw them in my purse. I walked to his bureau and picked up his broken comb. I began ripping through my snarled hair. The mirror was shaped like a shield, the kind a knight in arms would carry. On its frame were painted small pink roses. The mirror was old and it distorted my reflection. As I put the comb back I brushed his bundle of clothes slightly with my hand. A tennis shoe fell noisily to the ground, but he didn't move. I left it lying where it fell, picked up my purse, and put on my shoes. I fished a pencil from purse, and wrote my phone number on the wallpaper, next to all the others. I set the pencil down on the bureau. I did not bother to write my name next to my number. The door creaked loudly as I left, but I didn't look back to see if it had woke him.

Karen Jaffa, 1979



## Cyclothymic

Like a piano  
whose colorations are born  
of a black and white keyboard,  
my sky streams with color  
only on rainy sunny days  
that must be fluid to be cast  
solid in a mold of oxymoron.

I, like any timepiece, have  
two hands that touch my face  
and note the minutes passing.

I, like a metronome, am stable  
only in tilting on my axis  
between left and right, in any time  
from largo to presto,  
the rhythms of my system bred  
of a mainspring that is  
merely a spiral bit of chaos.

Deborah L. Mutch, 1976

## Picture Window

A trail of wet green grass followed me across the field next to our house. Making patterns around the trees, my path in the dew could be easily traced. I noticed the curious eye of a grey squirrel, with nut in hand he stopped and stared.

My arms brushed by the thick hedge as I made my way towards the garden. In the middle of it stood a small weathered birdbath. It was quite simple, having no hand carved figures or fancy rim. Daily I scrubbed and poured fresh water into its basin. Picking the hose off the ground I pushed on the rubber nozzle, a gush of hot water spirted out. After filling the bowl I sprinkled the surrounding flowers. The sun beat down and the soil drank quickly, leaving the bed moist.

Walking on the hill alongside the house I saw my legs reflecting off the picture window, moving rhythmically one in front of the other. I stopped and stared at my bony kneecaps shifting positions as I stepped. My vision focused on the objects inside the room, it looked like a world in a dome- quietly contained.

I walked along the side of the hill until I saw the stairs to the cellar. Opening the door I noticed the cold dampness in the air. The dog, escaping the heat of the day slept soundly on the cement floor. I walked up the stairs till I reached the door to the big room. It seemed odd to be looking out on the hill I had just come from. Things looked so different seeing them from the inside, all the sites and noises locked out. I stared at the large terrarium on the table, its pungent odor carried to my seat. The room was full of plants and arrangements all facing the sunlight.

A loud thump on the window startled me. Outside a bird flew in circles close to the ground. It's course was broken by a dive into the window. Again it circled and came. This time I jumped up and set my body against the glass. I knew it was useless, the bird could not see me. Persistently it slammed-again and again, each time rushing faster to the target. The blue and yellow feathered slicked close to its body, the small frame slapped and bounced from the surface. I watched it's repeated attempts until it hit and fell.

My eyes dropped to see the helpless creature whose gaze fixed on mine. It lay motionless on the walkway below. A warm breeze tustled its feathers, hopes rose for a moment imagining the bird to fly. I walked outside and crouched down, the bird seemed to quiver as I carefully cupped my hands and lifted it onto the grass. Its soft feathers warmed in the sun as I stroked the tiny body. My head lifted as I heard calls from the trees. Surrounded by a thousand voices, my presence abhorred, I rose watching my legs glide slowly past the picture window.

Robin Cramer 1977



Carrie Griscom 1977

## Avril Sanford

Avril traded me a piece of bread for  
all my marbles, even the tiger eyes,  
she never let me play tarzan or jane or boy  
or even cheata, when we played that game;  
on dress-up days, she'd always get the robinegg  
blue bathrobe mom wore on my birthdays,  
so that I was very surprised when  
she said in this game  
my sister Annie would be the star.

With some white rope from the kitchen junk drawer  
Avril tied Annie in knots  
to a china cabinet. Then unbuttoned  
the smooth plastic buttons, one by one,  
like the day we peeled the green bark of milkweed pods,  
except this made me sick and wish her  
mother was home. I ran into the kitchen,  
stared at the warm chocolate mild and  
the raspberry measled knife, thought  
of lunch on the sunporch, tiger cats  
sleeping on the floor, pirate stories read outloud,  
and of the catepillars scaling the screen  
like moving pieces of an oriental rug . . .  
Annie screamed—

I ran to her, Avril had taken off her clothes.  
Her underwear was rolled down to her feet,  
her eyes very sharply green.  
She stared through me like the day  
Yum-Yum our beagle burst like  
a great red balloon all over glen street.  
We ran for sheets,  
big white sheets to wrap our Yum-Yum in.  
She stared at me that way in my mind  
out the backdoor and up the path.  
I told mom we needed sheets, Avril's house, Annie, Annie  
she didn't understand, she thought  
another beagle was dead.

Cathy Calello, 1979

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Liz Farmer



## Two Endings

for Madge Barclay

### I.

When Mother called to tell me  
Grandmother had slipped away,  
I asked if my dark red dress  
Would be dark enough. Mother  
Had bought a black suit  
A year and a half ago,  
After the second stroke.  
She said, "we will arrive  
On Eastern, flight number sixty;  
Would you meet us beside  
The pay televisions, across  
From the souvenir stand?"  
On the way to the cemetery  
The taxi driver told us,  
"It cost six point five million  
Taxpayers' dollars, and took  
Three and a half years to build  
The John F. Kennedy Memorial;  
And just to keep the grass mowed  
in this her cemetery, it costs  
Twenty thousand bucks a year."

### II.

When I had gone upstairs, Mother  
Called up, "forgot to tell you,  
Katie phoned to say that Madge  
Died suddenly night before last.  
Katie thought she should tell you  
So that you would not stop in  
To wish them Happy New Year  
On your way back without knowing."  
I locked the door and called Katie—  
Madge's heart had burst, she slumped

Over the breakfast table  
With cigarette smoke winding up  
For a minute or two beside her hair.  
I thought of the summers I had  
Lived there, at Cabin Farm;  
I saw her walking from stall to stall  
In her nightgown and work boots  
At six-thirty, feeding the horses;  
And leading a foal with one hand  
On its nose, her arm around  
The base of its neck, pressing  
her weight into its shoulder.  
I thought of days in July  
We had sat rocking on the porch  
To wait our four o'clock storms.  
She'd say on a bright blue afternoon  
"Better get the bedding in—  
It'll rain in twenty minutes."  
The first week I just kept on  
Filling up the water buckets  
And, in half an hour, ran,  
Drenched, into the cabin.  
Smiling, she would fix me a drink  
And say, "in New England you can't  
See a storm coming over  
The mountain like that, can you?"  
My mother and father kept passing  
The peas and french fries at me,  
But I could not imagine piling up  
Peas on a fork, not now.  
I was drawn to a place,  
To people five states away,  
But the funeral would be small,  
At the grave, for just the family;  
No flowers. Like an airplane  
In fog, not scheduled to land,  
I hovered helplessly over her house.

Sherry Buttrick 1976

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## **Song, For Robin Cramer**

Whispering, but we're all remembering  
How she used to sing  
Of hoofbeats in the rain.

Ain't it strange how love and laughter  
can melt to pain  
When the summer came  
Lord, we miss you, friend.

Now you're both free to chase the wind at sea,  
To live your life in harmony,  
To remember all you can.

Whispering, but we're all remembering  
How she used to sing  
Of hoofbeats in the rain.

Hunter Davis, 1978





## A Happy Thing

(because you asked me to write one)

First, are you looking  
for something material, a balanced object, a circle all complete?  
That would be nice wouldn't it?  
Then you always know what the end will be.  
What about a circle, not perfect, but fuzzy and complete,  
a ring of fluid  
like a sweaty glass leaves.  
You can wipe away the ring so easily,  
but don't  
consider a particle of dust floating  
in the ring, and think not many see it,  
it is small, but it is there.

I

Now, if you try all the handles on everything  
at some point in the circle you are going to bang  
into stops, fuzzy piano stops  
that strike human singing strings,  
so consider why people write  
names on walls, in hearts, in the bathroom, no less.  
Are walls higher forms than paper?  
they are stable, give undefined space, are uncrunchable, are honest  
places unafraid of what they say  
but you think a bathroom has a comforting privacy  
the hearts destroy  
are you afraid of what they say?  
or does it crawl on your skin that someone else sat on that seat?  
You don't mind sitting on the grass, the johnny-seat of all beasts  
and talking a blue streak about beauty  
are you afraid of people,  
or what they say,  
or what they feel?  
Well, the walls deceive you, and you will run into people  
But you don't have to be sad about bumps into things,  
you just have to find your way.

## II

I know the bruises are enough.  
I think I was a child yesterday  
and I have now outgrown all awkwardness  
of gawkiness and scraped knees and roller skate falls  
the bleeding is dry,  
dry to the bone, but the hurt runs deeper  
I am sitting at the dinner table  
someone asks how I am, and I choke  
on my food, because of that damn lump in my throat  
cold lump of snow that never melts  
and I swore I'd never let anyone see me like this  
so much on the surface, like hot nervy nerves  
Don't touch me, I am losing control  
lump to bone I am sick  
I have a terminal disease  
it works like a vacuum, sucking at me  
never letting scraped-knee blood dry up.

## III

You think its all over  
truth is, its too hard to cope with,  
but I love it.  
Something inside me loves it,  
like blood that drips slowly away in cycles  
I can call it sickness, health, richness, pooriness  
face it, it is mine forever.  
It never stops  
producing, pulling, pushing, shoving, sucking, yakking, hacking,  
hating, hurting, learning, loving  
(catch those last two words?)  
it is small, but it is there.

Anne Taylor Quarles, 1978



My Shadow

Lauren Place, 1978

## Visiting You

I The cottage that they rented had been built in a cow pasture. It was fenced in with barbed wire. The cottage's barbed wire corral was a small square within the large square of cow pasture. A going nowhere road ran along one edge of the fencing. Tall cool trees lined the road. The cows bunched together along the fence near the road because there was shade there. They were always standing there, chewing stupidly, all pointed the same way, flipping their manure stained tails through thick clouds of gnats and mosquitos. He and Pam had rented the cottage since the beginning of the summer—a month now. Someone asked them how they liked it. Billy said, "It's a dump, but what can you expect?": Pam said she hate it and every god-damned thing about it, she couldn't wait to leave the cottage, and the state of New York, and the flies, and the cows. And her husband. They didn't love each other.

Billy would have preferred to have Pam and their year old daughter somewhere other than New York. He told her this often, he reminded her that she was the one that insisted on coming with him. Billy didn't like Grey, N. Y., but he wouldn't bitch on it either. It was a job, he had to be there. Billy has always been like this; unpleasant things, disadvantages—he doesn't think about them. Work—he accepts the idea, the *concept*, he goes through some of the more basic motions of working, but he dodges work more than anything else. He is the laziest person I know.

II How did I marry you? You trapped me, you and the conception. I couldn't get away from it. Sometimes I imagine that there could have been another man back then, someone else who impregnated you and got away. *It could have been me.* I should have left you. I am young, I am smart, I knew from the first you could never satisfy me, never fill my idea of what a wife should be. It was my idea to toy with you from the very start. The only affection I ever felt for you was that which I would feel for a dog, a horse, no, not even that; I loved you like I loved my car, something to use, to get me places. That's all. I'm sure there was never anything else.

III The child. The child walks well though she doesn't talk much yet. Her favorite toy is a plush turtle but she likes to open low cabinet doors and roll out can. She resembles neither Billy or Pam—light blond hair, funny nose, small, serious, silent. The child looks to her mother for everything; to be picked up, held, fed, lifted out of her crib—this pleases Pam. Yet the child is not afraid of Billy, she smiles and gurgles when he holds her, it is just that she believes more strongly in Pam. The child is fragile, she cries easily and develops great, delicate purple bruises from slight knocks. They call her Heather Lynne.

IV “He was asleep, he fell asleep after that big dinner, so I came to pick you up.” Pam swung the Impala out of the bus station lot; she is short, she has to stretch up and forward from the seat to see where she’s going. Pam has always talked a lot, she doesn’t require much reply from the other side of the conversation. Now she chatters to me. About the cottage and being in New York, how she hates it. About Heather, asleep in her crib, at the cottage with Billy. About money, how she can never be sure of having definite amounts to budget—“the way *he* is.” About Billy’s operation. “They thought it was just an overnight thing, you know, just a little routine thing, and then they hacked from front to back, fifty-two stitches! My God, I had to laugh, I mean it was terrible and all, but can you imagine Billy listening to the doctors tell him he’d be running around the next day—then he wakes up and he can barely walk. That’s why we asked you to come for a while, because he can’t possibly do the horses, but you know that—”

“I know.”

V “Billy. Billy, hey man—what’they *do* to you?”

Pam is changing the dressing, I have just entered the cottage for the first time. He is lying sleepy on the bed, but he is glad to show off wound. It looks very bad to me, a long line of puckered stitches snaking from near his navel to the middle of his back. The flesh is dull, unhealthy red all around the stitches. There is a drain taped to one end of the stitching. Billy cringes as Pam tapes the clean dressing on. It must hurt.

“But what the hell was it, Billy?” I ask.

“A fatty tumor— doesn’t that sound gross? It couldn’t just be a tumor, it had to be a *fat-ty* tumor. But goddamnit, the doc promised it would just be a bitty incision, just pop it right out he says, back to work the next day he says.”

“So what happened?” I ask, “how’d you get fifty-two stitches?”

“Roots.”

“Roots?”

“The goddamn thing had roots. The tumor had roots. From *here* to *there*. The doctor, he had to *dig* them out.”

“Ah. *Roots*. ”

VI Sometimes I think our marriage could be tolerable if we didn’t fight. I think I hate her most then. If she would only learn not to scream at me, not to pick at me, not to question or nag—I could tolerate her. I think she loves me sometimes, in her own stupid way, or maybe she just doesn’t want to face the fact she trapped the un-ideal man. She keeps the house clean, she feeds me, she takes all the care of the baby—if she only wouldn’t fight with me! She

does, though, she has from almost the beginning, I know. When was the first, can I remember, does it matter?

VII He had been married to her three months. She was pregnant five. Small, but fat, gross with pregnancy, sickly, sour—he disliked her very much then. He was confused every day. Emotions sloshed over him all the time. He kept away from her as much as he could. Sometimes he convinced himself to reform, convinced himself he wanted to be a “good” husband, but he was always too lazy to follow any resolves or intentions through. There was only one thing he did absolutely correctly in his first three months of marriage, and that was staying away from all other women. It wasn’t difficult because he didn’t feel attracted to women much—others or his wife. He, Billy, with a great personality, good looks and verve; he who had been more than somewhat of a Cassanova before marriage; he was dazed, confused, amazed still at being married.

He would leave her alone at night and go to the track grandstand. He could lose himself in the races, talk to a ticket seller he knew, and return to his house trailer late, the evening spent.

One night the ticket seller told him to stay. Billy did, the man was an old friend of his—they walked out to the ticket seller’s car together. There were two girls there. No—Billy tried to say—no, this isn’t what I need, it isn’t that I care about the marriage, it’s that I don’t know what I want yet. The words never formed and Billy laughed and talked and had a drink instead, parked there in the seller’s Pontiac. The girls were dogs, but after talking to them a while Billy decided that they had personality, and that’s what counted anyway, right? The seller and he seemed closer friends than ever before, and he grinned when the seller looked at him questioningly.

“Look,” said the seller “Diane and I here, we’d kind of like to go for a little drive somewhere. By ourselves—what d’ya say Billy, why don’t we drop you and Debbie off by your trailer and you can get *your* car and go somewhere in that? Sound good?”

The seller was married and had three children. Billy was married and almost had a child. Billy’s car was parked outside his house trailer. Pam was inside that trailer.

“Sounds great,” Billy said.

The seller left them off at the end of his road and disappeared. Billy could see his car farther down the road, he had the key pressed in his hand already. It was quite late. Billy had no doubts, for the first time in months he felt sure and alive and exhilarated. Debbie was frightened.

“But what if your wife looks out the window?”

“Sleeps like a log” Billy said.

"But suppose she hears us getting into the car?"

"She's dead to the world" he said.

"But suppose the car's engine wakes her?"

"Listen," said Billy, "listen, I could light a stick of *dynamite* under that trailer! BAM! And I guarantee you, she wouldn't skip a beat of her snore." Billy felt justified in saying this, he had always hated the way Pam slept, like she was in a coma.

They reached the car, Billy glanced over at his house trailer. Dark as a tomb. He laughed, defying Pam, defying his marriage—pulled Debbie to him, standing there outside his car, and kissed her.

Pam came running down the trailer steps. Screaming, screeching, something terrible and murderous, brandishing a flashlight. It was so unexpected, so incredible to Billy—that she was on him before he knew it. She hit him, she hit Debbie, she kicked and scratched and swore at them both. She bent the flashlight hitting him.

That was the occasion of their first real fight. He had almost forgotten, really. There had been better ones later.

VIII This goddamn place—Pam had said—this goddamn shanty situated in the middle of a cow playground, I hate it.

I didn't think it was that bad. Once you got used to the cows. There was a porch, a kitchen, and two bedrooms with a bathroom between. The outside of the cottage was painted red, it looked shiny and fresh. There was new linoleum in the kitchen, and a new stove. The refrigerator was old, with a round motor on top. It had legs. The door opened with a heavy click, like a car door. Inside, there was a freezer, except it was jammed solid with accumulated frost and ice particles. The ice could not completely fill the cavity because a package of french fries held it back. Yet the french fries were surrounded so solidly by ice we could not have gotten them out to cook had we want to.

Disadvantages about the house: no TV reception (this bothered Pam the most); no hot water (Billy's fault, he didn't get a new tank of propane); hardly any electrical outlets that worked; too many flies; too isolated; too small; and too easy for Pam to find fault with. Also, there were noises from above sometimes, Billy thought it might be burglars or bats. On occasions, Billy is surprisingly scareable.

Heather Lynne seemed to like the cottage.

IX The second day I was there, Heather fell outside and hit her head on the flagstone porch steps. She screamed immediately, it had been a hard hit. Pam came running, grabbed Heather, and screamed at her: "You little bitch!"



Why did you do that! Now your heads all bruised and your father will think I didn't watch you!" Heather screamed louder, hurt and frightened. Sometimes Pam seems two totally different persons, I can't understand it.

X Billy's job. Billy's job fits his lifestyle. He trains four racehorses. At one time he had more, at one time he had less. Billy has only one "owner;" this owns three and a half of the four horses and pays Billy for taking care of and training them. The stray half horse belongs to Billy, he and his owner each have a fifty percent interest in it. The difficulty of training horses for a living lies in the pay. There is a base rate, but what really determines a trainer's take-home is the ten percent cut he gets from any purses the four horses may win. The constant uncertainty about money is one of the things Pam detests about being married to Billy.

Another disadvantage is that the owners exert too much control over the trainers' lives. Billy's owner wanted to see his horses race at Grey, therefore Billy had to move the whole stable and himself to New York. Billy would rather not have owners, he would rather not work at all, but he has to have money. Billy would rather not be married, yet he likes someone to clean his house and wash his clothes.

There is an underlying leech-ness to Billy. He has a smug complacency about him, he believes everyone will watch out for him. He is the world's champion cigarette bummer also.

XI Sunday, Sunday Billy's wound felt well enough that he could drive a car. We told Pam we were going to feed the horses, we left her and Heather and the cows behind us.

Billy, he drives careless. Fast, and through stop lights. Passes on curves. He overshoots exits and has to back up. He hits trees. Billy drives with one hand in his lap and the other holding a cigarette. Two fingers curl up from the hand in his lap. Steering, the car has power steering. Two fingers can make it *jump*. While he drives he talks, sometimes about nothing—meals, the horses, places we pass; sometimes about himself, which maybe he'd say was nothing if you asked.

Billy talks a lot while driving. He twists his whole body toward you and fixes an intense, earnest stare on your face. He waves the cigarette to make points. He wants to elicit a *response*. He wants to know what you're thinking. Sometimes he forgets about the road and the car skips onto the shoulder before he remembers. Sunday we drive through towns, bright little towns garish and filled with vacation people. The land was hilly and from the road the houses looked stacked, pieced together into one continuous jumbled structure. We turned right in Huntington, not knowing where he wanted to go,

sharp uphill right, moving between layers of cottages. We were going into the mountains.

Every mile we saw a sign: "Ice Caverns! See the Ice Caverns!" with an arrow pointing up the mountain. "Ice Caverns! Family fun!"; "Ice Caverns! . . . Nature's Masterpiece!" Billy pushed the car faster and faster up the mountain, squealing around curves, bolting up the straightaways. "Ice Caverns! Turn here!" We turned, still ascending, following the arrows for miles and miles. It seemed incredible we had been following the signs so far, we had come thirty miles since the first. The road grew torturously contorted, doubling back on itself, missing chunks of pavement, blazing into wilderness. Not a house in sight, only blue and white signs: "Ice Caverns! Finest in the World!" We arrived. There was a parking lot with three cars, an admission gate, and a small collection of stunned-looking tourists milling near the cars. The ice caverns were nowhere in sight. I don't know where they kept them.

Billy grinned and whipped the car around. "Family fun" he said. We bolted back down the mountain. We read signs all the way back: "Ice Caverns! Go back!"; "Ice Caverns! Other Direction!" We laughed, he put the car in neutral and we coasted all the way to Huntington. Up to eight-five on the steep downhills. Back in time for supper.

XII Barbecue Monday noon time, friends over. They were behaving very badly toward each other, they had been all morning. Having an audience encourages Pam, she confuses me. She has the most foul mouth I know.

The chicken legs were on the hibachi and I was in the bathroom when I heard Pam shriek "You goddamn ignorant good-for-nothing! Common bastard—I ought to divorce you!" It wasn't really an outraged shriek. I guessed that it was only because she had caught him doing something stupid—like letting the chicken burn. She enjoys catching him being dumb. But this time she under-estimated her abrasiveness, Billy bellowed "SHUT-UP" and dragged her into the house. They didn't know I was there. I could tell he was holding her arms, she was squeaking "Let me go!" Her feet were scrabbling on the floor and getting nowhere.

"Pam" he said softly, seriously. "Pam, listen to me. You have no right to shoot off your mouth like that. Do you remember what we talked about before? Do you remember what I told you I'd do when I got home? Listen. I'm not kidding anymore. If you don't keep your manners around my friends, I *will* ditch you and consider myself well off. I will." She didn't listen. All she saw was that she had reached him, she had really gotten to him, and this pleased her. She laughed at him, she liked seeing how upset she could get him.

"God, you are ignorant" she said. He stared at her queerly, let go of her

and walked outside.

XIII I can't stand it. I hate living like this. Why does she have to be like she is? Can't she ever shut up and be pleasant?

XIV All hell broke loose at the kitchen table that afternoon. Billy was being as deliberately offensive and hurtful as he knew how to Pam. At first she enjoyed the situation, loved getting digs in at Billy. But Billy, he's smarter than her, he knows how to hurt deeper with words, he knows how to return her insults and make her look dumb doing it. Pam never really realizes her disadvantage, but she recognizes when she starts beating her at her own game. He pushes it far enough and she's reduced to repeating a few stock phrases, screaming them to drown him out. Like "I hate you, I hate you" and "You'll see" and "I'm going back to Mother."

"I hate you! I hate you!"

"Have another cheeseburger, Pammy. They're so good, Pammy, just the thing for your fat ass, Pammy!"

"I don't want your shitty cheeseburgers, Billy. And I don't want to see your shitty face again in my life."

"Sure are good cheeseburgers, Pammy."

"Billy, I'm going back to Mother. I'm leaving today. I'm taking Heather and everything I own with me. The blankets are mine, the dishes are mine, the table's mine, the toaster's mine—"

"If your mother will let you in the door, she's a bigger fool than I thought she was."

Pam picked up a quart bottle of Dr. Pepper. "One more word—*one more word* from you and I swear I'll put this through your head."

"Have a cheeseburger, dearie."

She threw it. It smashed on the wall above his head, close, but not that close. Billy looked at her like she was a dangerous criminal. "God—Pam—you ought to be locked up. You are really mentally deficient. *Something's not right with you.*" He's serious now, he's had enough of baiting her, but she's just started.

"The hibachi's mine too. And I might as well take the car—I made the down payment on it, didn't I?" The last startles Billy, he has left the keys in the ignition. I can tell he's wondering whether she knows that they're out there. She does, she's heading for the door. "Keys are out there, huh Billy?"

Billy looks at me. "Well" he says, "get ready. It looks like it's going to be a race for the car." The scene has become ludicrous, even Pam sees this. The Dr. Pepper is still trickling down the wall.

Pam looks at him. Sometimes she looks at him like he was everything

she'd ever wanted or dreamed of, no matter what he does to her, she has to love him. She can't escape him, it hinders her logical thinking. When she bursts out with pent up frustrations to him, she can't make her mood stick. I think she probably thought being married to Billy would make her happy. It hasn't—and she's not sure what's not right. She doesn't know what to do.

XV "Goddamn you Billy, I will leave with that car."

He considers. Gets up. "Time to be moving on" he says.

Visit's over.

Jean Romanski, 1977



# OF A' THE AIRTS

TEXT: ROBERT BURNS

RUTH E. HARPER

ST. ANDREWS EXCHANGE STUDENT

2. THERE'S WILD WOODS GROW, AND RIVERS ROW,  
AND MONY A HILL BETWEEN;  
BUT DAY AND NIGHT MY FANCY'S FLIGHT,  
IS EVER WIL' MY JEAN.
3. I SEE HER IN THE DEWY FLOWERS,  
I SEE HER SWEET AND FAIR;  
I HEAR HER IN THE TUNEFUL' BIRDS,  
I HEAR HER CHARM THE AIR.
4. THERE'S NOT A BONIE FLOWER THAT SPRINGS,  
BY FOUNTAIN, SHAW OR GREEN,  
THERE'S NOT A BONIE BIRD THAT SINGS,  
BUT REMDS ME O' MY JEAN.

This musical composition won first prize in a class competition in Ms. Jane Perry-Camp's "Advanced Harmony" course.

## **Dawn on Stillwater Pond**

Early morning  
quiet mist lies  
snow-fall thick over  
a Vermont lake hugged by  
mountains roundabout.  
Owl's head peers  
its tower perched invisible  
Groton-guarding.  
On Stillwater I leave  
the shore.  
Sled-quick my boat  
glides over glass.  
Creaky I row  
out, around. Parting  
the mist I squint for  
a lonely cove.  
Oar-echoes bounce off  
the shore. Following  
its curve, I find  
the perfect hidden spot.  
One house lies empty  
nestled in trees. Surrounding  
forest is still—no piers, boats.  
I drift, twirling first  
then still.  
I lean, casting. My rod  
arches its back-spitting line  
to the sky.  
Which drops splashing into  
the water.  
I turn it in.  
Repeating, I watch the silver spinner  
turn twist spiral as it swims.



Slower I reel, then fast.  
It jumps to the surface,  
then dives. The spinner  
not wanting to return,  
my rod bends  
to touch the water.  
I let the spinner have freedom.  
The line goes slack  
then tightens.  
I reel it in,  
pulling it towards  
the boat; I reach  
and net-scoop  
from Stillwater  
my first fish.

Cecile R. Owens, 1979

## On The Street Where You Live

I enrolled in a winter term publishing course after I found out it included two weeks of appointments and meetings with representatives and vice-presidents in charge of public relations in New York City and Washington, D. C.: *Time, Inc., Conde Nast, The New York Public Library, The New York Times.* We were there the morning after Tom Snyder had filmed for his "Tomorrow Show"—which is why, when we passed the op-ed department, I dropped back long enough to spot the woman he had interviewed. She sure was acting like nothing had happened, which is what kept me from telling her. . .something. I hurried on to catch up with the others. At night, while most of the girls in the group went to an all night bar called "somebody's mustache," I went to Broadway shows: *Moon Children, Grease, A Little Night Music, Pippin, Good Evening...* up above the world so high, like a diamond. . .

On the way back to my hotel one night, I ran into a crowd gathered outside the back entrance to the Winter Garden. Whatever was going on, it was worth waiting for. . .so I waited. I waited an hour and fifteen minutes. . .for Liza Minnelli, expected to be leaving soon. Somehow, she was suppose to get from the back door of the theatre, through this mob to the side door of her limousine waiting at the curb. I had to see her pull it off. Bodyguards and policemen kept opening the thick stage door, leaning out into the crowd on the bank vault-like door knob and saying "Miss Minnelli won't be coming out tonight." Did they really expect me to fall for that? I mean her limousine was waiting and everything. Sure, Liza Minnelli was going to spend the night in the theatre. I could see it now. Finally, someone stepped out and said "Move back, you're going to have to move back." I struggled forward. Bodyguards clasped hands forming a ring against the crowd of nobodies and suddenly. . . there she was. . .Liza. She glittered over the threshold, then tripped helplessly into her protective circle. God, I wish that was me. Ben Vereen was right behind her. This is incredible! I couldn't believe what little I was able to see. Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what. . .the mob swelled and pushed me further down the sidewalk. Hey, watch it! Quit shoving! I was here first! Elbows and heads slapped me in the face. Someone gave my lungs pleurisy. My ribs squeezed to be free. I was frustrated. I shouldered my way out of a sea of nobodies and ran around to the other side of the limousine, the side in the street. The cars were stopped a block back at the light. I saw her. I saw her up close and face on as she ducked into the back seat. Mr. Vereen followed her in. Hey Liza, hey Liza! I sat on the trunk of her limosine, out of the way of oncoming headlights now given the green go-ahead and began to tap at the back windshield. Hey Liza, hey Liza! She turned in her seat and rippled

her false fingernails right in front of my eyes. They sure were long. Hey Liza, hey Liza! I kept pecking away. Look at the stems on those yellow roses. Hey Liza, hey Liza! I wish my mother was Judy Garland. Ben Vereen pretended to take my nose away through the glass. I was that close. He pretended he had it but I knew it was his thumb. This is incredible. No one is going to believe it. Amelia McClare, a gooner from goonersville, yelling Liza, hey Liza! Why did I keep saying that? Was I really doing this? Had I lost control? What more did I want? . . .to be invited inside? Hey Liza, hey Liza! Oh Amelia, I'm so embarrassed I know you. What was that? A stab? No, someone had hold of my belt. Let go! I swiped their hand away without looking back. Hey Liza, hey Liza! Suddenly, I was dangling in mid-air. I looked back. Yipes! A policeman on horseback had hoisted me off like shipboard cargo. He sure looked aggravated—with a capital P. You wouldn't happen to be McCloud would you? He stared mean. No sense of humor. I stared mean back. Inside, I hysterically fainted. I turned around and the limousine was gone. He set me down on the ground, my legs running before they hit the sidewalk. I took off before he could trot me off to the hoosegow, before he could back hand me into the slammer and call my Mother, before he had time to discuss why I was so rebellious, why I had changed, why I wasn't inwardly calm and outwardly reserved. I took off for my hotel, running like a crazed banana. . .from macabre into macabre. Wait till they hear who waved to me. . .if they could see me now, that little gang of mine. . .

I couldn't wait to go back and do it again. The next day I tried hard to get up and pretend that nothing had happened. I tried to pay attention, to listen to a double breasted man on the other side of a round table. I made myself listen. . .and watch as one by one the other girls closed their eyes, first the left and then the right, and slept sitting up. Leaving, on the elevator heading down, I suggested they get more sleep; they suggested I wear better clothes. Thus crushed, they smirked and skipped out. That was the last time I said anything to anybody in an elevator.

When I arrived at the stage door that night, same time, only three people were there. I asked one where Liza was and she said she had already left. I asked another and he said Liza would be arriving any minute, that she had agreed to do a benefit performance at midnight. No sooner had I looked at my watch when a long limousine pulled out of an even longer lane and eased ever so easily to a stop. There was a girl in the back and she was all over the man next to her. The girl jumped out. It was Liza. She walked right past me without realizing who I was. . .a future famous person. A guard was at her elbow. That's what I want. A guard at my elbow. She had on black everything: turtleneck, pants and jacket. I kept very still. I forced myself to freeze.

I didn't say a word, only thought to myself that her shoulders were wider than I had expected. She disappeared behind the door, and onto the stage of somebodies. And that was that. Is that it? The man in the limousine watched until she was safely inside and then motioned for the driver to go on. I'd never seen him before. He looked like the Chase Manhattan Bank.

I ran around to the ticket window. Sold out. Are you sure? Sold out three months ago. Are you sure? Listen Lady, if you ain't got a ticket already, there's no way you can see the show. . .now beat it. Sure, sure I hear you, put an egg in my shoe. . . I moved into the lobby and stopped right before you had to give the man your ticket. I could see past the man to the inside, at the rows and rows of historic red seats. Just think, people had appeared on that stage during vaudeville: Milton Berle, Al Jolsen, Fanny Brice, William Demarest. . . The lobby was beginning to look like fifty dozen dismembered hands holding tickets. So many people get to go in. . .if only someone would drop theirs. If only someone would invite me inside. I moved to the side, flat against the wall, out of the way Amelia. Maybe I could sneak in. Yes, I think I could do it. But then what? Where would I sit? Oh my God, there's Garrick Utley, standing two feet above the rest of the crowd. Is he ever tall. Is he ever handsome. Why was I surprised? He looks so intelligent. That's how I want to look: intelligent. How pretty that blond is who's with him. I wonder if she's anybody. Pay attention Amelia. Isn't that Julie Harris? No, yes, no yes it is, over by the door. . .what was the name of that movie?. . .*Member of the Wedding*? Her name was Frankie, and she wore an undershirt and laid her head on Ethel Waters' shoulder. . .darn I can't remember. Look at her, so pale. . . I jumped. A profiled Jack Cassidy was slicing the crowd deftly, not ten inches away from my careening eyeballs. Straighten up Amelia, act normal, close your mouth, be still, be quiet, flat against the wall, flatter, here he comes, breath in. . .his sleeve just missed my nose. I thought I was about to tug it. Am I? I jammed my hands behind the small of my back as etched features, silver white hair, smooth skin, slim moustache, straight white teeth (was he gritting them?) went sailing by. He left behind the smell of tailored clothes and manicured nails. I breathed out. They actually walk around by themselves, they really do. . .no, Larry Blyden's with him. There's Larry Blyden. He sure is in a hurry. I wonder why no one's excited? Everyone looks so sad and worn out. Excuse me, Miss. . .ticket? No, I don't have a ticket. Then you're going to have to clear out. Couldn't I stay? Just a little while? I won't cause any trouble. . .I promise. Rules is rules Lady, move along now. Whoever it was didn't know who they were firmly pushing out of the lobby. Hey, it's me. . .Amelia McClare. I tried to get back in but he was locking the doors from the inside as fast as I could move down and try them. And I tried them

all, slowly, gracefully, with all the nonchalance I could manufacture so no one would sense my disappointment, my despair, my lunacy. It came off looking like cheap sophistication. I tried them all. I walked back to the hotel, trying to talk my mind into sitting up straight in its chair. Spoiled rotten to the bone.

The last night I was in New York City I saw a performance of the American Ballet celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of "Fancy Free". During intermission, while most of the other girls I was with were in the bathroom (my cut-out-moon-on-the-door bladder control past paid off handsomely sometimes) I hung over the railing of the rear mezzanine, quietly scrutinizing the faces of the crowd on the main floor below. I wished for Broadway Joe. Then I saw him. Yes, it had to be him. Sitting three rows back on the aisle seat, slumped way down in his chair, legs fully extended under the seat of the row in front of him. It had to be. I recognized his hair. Maybe it's not him. There's no one around him, no one talking to him or sitting with him. Surely there'd be people clamoring, clinging. . . But it could be. After all, he is a composer.

I grabbed my program, said excuse me five hundred times as I brushed past people on the way down the stairs. Too many people. Hurry Amelia hurry. I burst onto the main floor and walked with as much moxie savy as I could muster down the aisle. About twenty feet away from the third row back, I stopped. What are you doing Amelia? Can you tell me what it is you're doing. You want to grow up and be a groupie? Is that what you want? What in the hell do you want? Celebrities don't like to be bothered. That's why he's sitting all alone. Celebrities don't like to be pestered for autographs. Paul Newman says it's idiotic and won't give them. . .and it is. Is that what you want Amelia. . .to be idiotic? Why? So you can prove to everybody that you talked to "somebody"? Why? They don't care. They've seen it all before. Let it be your secret. Be proud of yourself and walk away. Let it go Amelia. Let go. I took five more steps and stopped again. It was him. I was positive. I could see his nose and his fingertips pressed together in thought. Leave him alone Amelia, I'm warning you. So you recognized him. . . Alright, already! . . .go on, but don't you dare cause a scene. If no one's noticed him by now, don't go calling attention to the fact that he's here. I mean it Amelia. Put on your normal face and behave. I walked right up to the third row aisle seat and knelt low on one knee. Mr. Bernstein? Yes? Could I have your autograph? Say something Amelia. . .I couldn't find my mind. . .did someone shout abandon ship? I think it's terrific that something you composed thirty years ago is being celebrated as a classic. He smiled, he signed: Leonard Bernstein. What's your name? Amelia McClare. He wouldn't remember.

And then he talked to me, in a theatre full of people, he talked to me and me alone. "Jesus, can you believe this (listen to what he's saying Amelia, don't wander, pay attention) I'm sitting here, watching my music. . .Jesus Christ, thirty years, it's like a piece of immortality. . .Christ!" I looked into his face as he spoke, as he spoke to me out of a city of millions and to me alone. He was telling me what was in his mind, how he felt, telling me, a gooner from goonersville, out of all the nobodies in the world. . .me and me alone. I looked at his bronzed complexion, at his beautiful nose and his ten dancing fingers that I had seen pictures of holding a flourished baton, that now illustrated every spoken syllable. The house light winked. Thank you so very much, Mr. Bernstein. I shook his hand, stood up and floated out of my dream come true. No one was going to believe this. No one was going to care. When the blazing sun is gone, when he nothing shines upon, then you show little light, twinkle, twinkle all the night.

I spent the last week in Washington listening to publishers at the heads of square tables in rectangular rooms, at *National Geographic* at *The Washington Star News*, in the Library of Congress and at *U. S. News and World Report*. While I was in the Capitol I kept a sharp eye peeled for the even sharper Senator Kennedy. No cigar. I also tried to harass my congressman's secretary into giving me a ticket to the upcoming State of the Union address. I didn't think I had it in me to beg so I stopped just short of that. I knew there was a real possibility that it might be President Nixon's last. I ended up watching it on TV.

The final afternoon was a scheduled luncheon in the Smithsonian Institution cafeteria. I was thinking about all that had happened. The rest of the girls were dragging. . .their feet and their cigarettes. Maybe that's why they didn't pay any attention when I said "look who's walking through the door." Oh I forgot, they had seen it all before.

Two men appeared in the far doorway and began taking long looks around. They weren't smiling. They were "casing the joint" with curt lips. I knew it. I could feel it. Hey, over here, look at me. I have Mafia connections. Their faces were cool and observing. Really, I've had my phone tapped. I'm the best liability in the national security book. Their eyes passed quickly over mine. "I think someone important's about to enter the room." The girls at my table didn't bother to look up. They sunk their noses deeper into each other's business. My heart ran up a hill. One of the men in the doorway looked over his shoulder and nodded "okay." One stepped back to allow the man to enter. I jumped to my feet, dropping my silverware, started to salute, chose instead to point my napkin accusingly. By the time I said "look!" outloud to myself, he was. . .looking directly at me, with a melting smile and a silent

wink. Wait, stop, replay. Did you wink at me? Damn, I missed it. No, another figment-pigment. I grabbed my magazine, a felt-tip pen and started off in a demented pursuit. He was walking rather quickly now (he knew manic gooner when he saw one) destination in view, a private dining room door: V. I. P.'s only. He's going to disappear any second Amelia. I'm going to be too late and then you'll never see him again. Mr. Richardson. . . He stopped short on his back foot. I didn't compensate. I walked right into the back of his hand tailored jacket, right into his Boston shoulder darts, jolting him slightly. I'm sorry, I didn't think you were going to stop. The two men were there, peering down with curt lips. They were experts at curt lips I gathered. Curt lips are funny up close but I didn't have time to laugh. Mr. Richardson slowly, smoothly turned around to face his attacker. Yes? Oh Mr. Richardson, I extended my hand, I just about died when you walked in. Yes, I noticed.

He enveloped my hand and shook it evenly, gently. (He knew how to appease a manic gooner.) He smiled reassuringly. I began to feel bolder. No don't say it Amelia! Don't say "call off your bloodhounds and we'll talk." Could I please have your autograph? Certainly, what is your name? Amelia. . .Amelia McClare. He wouldn't remember. I held out the magazine. . .*U. S. News and World Report* from the morning meeting. I looked in horror at the headline emblazoned across the top: "If Nixon is impeached what then? Interview with new Attorney General." The headline began to spin. . .that's it, spin into oblivion. Too late, Mr. Richardson saw it. I was embarrassed. You've done it now Amelia. You've messed up bad. . .one star too far. He grinned lightly and dropped his hand diplomatically to the white space at the bottom: To Amelia with every good wish Elliot Richardson. I looked at his glasses, at the forehead where the mind that knew so much resided. What was that word?. . .Branhim. . .Brahnim? I must remember to look it up. Don't forget.

He thanked me—me! —extended his hand which I held onto a little too long. Let it go Amelia. Let go. His clasp was secure, comforting and then. . .he was gone, through the private door into the world of never never land where trouble melts like lemon drops away above the chimney tops. The latch caught with a seal. I want to go with you. God I really do. I won't be a nuisance. I'll be the best. Please let me come in. It's so awful on this side of the door. It's so painful. I thought you didn't have it in you to beg Amelia. I fell over the edge and fell and fell and fell. I found my mind and felt all the nobodies staring at me, their forks held midair, their eyes full of contempt (for my having bumped into Mr. Richardson?) Who does she think she is? Who do I have to be? I lowered my chin and my thoughts and walked away. No one was going to believe this. No one was going to care. To Amelia with every good wish....every good wish for what? That one day you'll join the rest of us in

never never land? I bet. I wish. A million little diamonds twinkled brightly on the trees; and all the little maidens said, "a jewel if you please!" But while they held their hands outstretched, to catch the diamonds gay, a million little sunbeams came, and stole them all away.

Rachel E. McGuire, 1977





Street in Ithaca

Elaine Milosis, 1977

Three times this summer you woke me  
from clawing, twitching dreams.  
I think they scared you more than me,  
but your calm, strong voice  
like my father's, never wavered  
until my sweaty body chilled.  
Then a kiss lightly planted on my forehead  
promised you'd be back  
after sheets were rescued from the floor.

I would shiver and watch the shadows  
on the ceiling play with the streetlight from outside  
and think how funny it was  
to be comforted in the night, like a child.

Sheets in place once more,  
You'd slide in beside me  
and I could doze back to sleep  
vaguely aware of the rhythm of your breathing  
and your arm on my stomach  
rising with my own, now slower breath.

Lisa Hite, 1979



## Carry me Back

I remember riding in a tall Terraplane down three-lane roads—  
There were sheaves stacked in the fields, wheat waiting for the reaper.  
We were going to Warm Springs, in Bath County; I bathed,  
    though male, in the ladies' pool.  
We stayed at Mrs. Somers Anderson's; the windows were wavy and bubbled,  
And the only electricity was a battery lamp in the bathroom,  
But there were many black maids.

My father was pleased to be back in Virginia; he took us to Manassas  
Where we climbed on cannon and would not take turns at winning  
    and losing.  
We walked in the Braddock Road, in the red dirt.  
Where there are bistros now, and bowling alleys.  
My father was Lee, my brother was Jackson, I was Jeb Stuart,  
Which meant that I had to move quicker and cover more ground.  
My father struck a sharp stick in a windfall apple and threw it far, far;  
George Washington threw a silver dollar across the Rappahannock.  
The Potomac was very dirty; there were thick-armed red-faced men  
    swimming in it  
I was scared of them—they were underprivileged.  
The sun shone always.

Now I am back in Virginia; I am pleased to be here.  
I can go to the Boonsborough Shopping Center and buy Moutarde  
    De Meaux;  
I can count the cows on the hills from my wide windows  
(The College has a Dutch dairyman; he is a far better farmer than any  
    Virginian).  
The chain saws snarl on spring afternoons.  
Halfway to the river there is a graveyard in the woods.  
There are cards fixed under plastic covers on sheetmetal posts  
Stating who lies here.  
Plastic wreaths lean against some of the posts;  
The plastic is stained with red mud.  
By the river is a green dyke for the C. and O. tracks—  
The coal trains roll along the James to the sea.  
The river is high and swift; eddies swirl across its broad face in the sun.  
On the heights on the other side, in Appomattox County  
Tall farmhouses stand, with wide dark chimneys at each end.  
I cannot think who lives there.

Bradley Headstone



Cathy Harold, 1979

## **Cold Night**

Cold night  
I've got jitters in my legs  
Then you slide in  
Careful not to hit your head  
on the underside of the bunk bed—our roof.  
We shiver together and the old bed creaks and sighs,  
surprised but happy in its movement.  
I feel your warmth and you feel mine.  
Two women-girls, we turn our backs, and pull  
the satin edged blanket around us  
Hanging on the edges of this mattress  
a pillow for each head.  
The hollow in this mattress fits the form of one body  
not two.  
I loosen my grip  
Letting myself slide  
To merge our backs and buttocks  
and feel my breath deepen with yours.

Karen L. Jaffa, 1979

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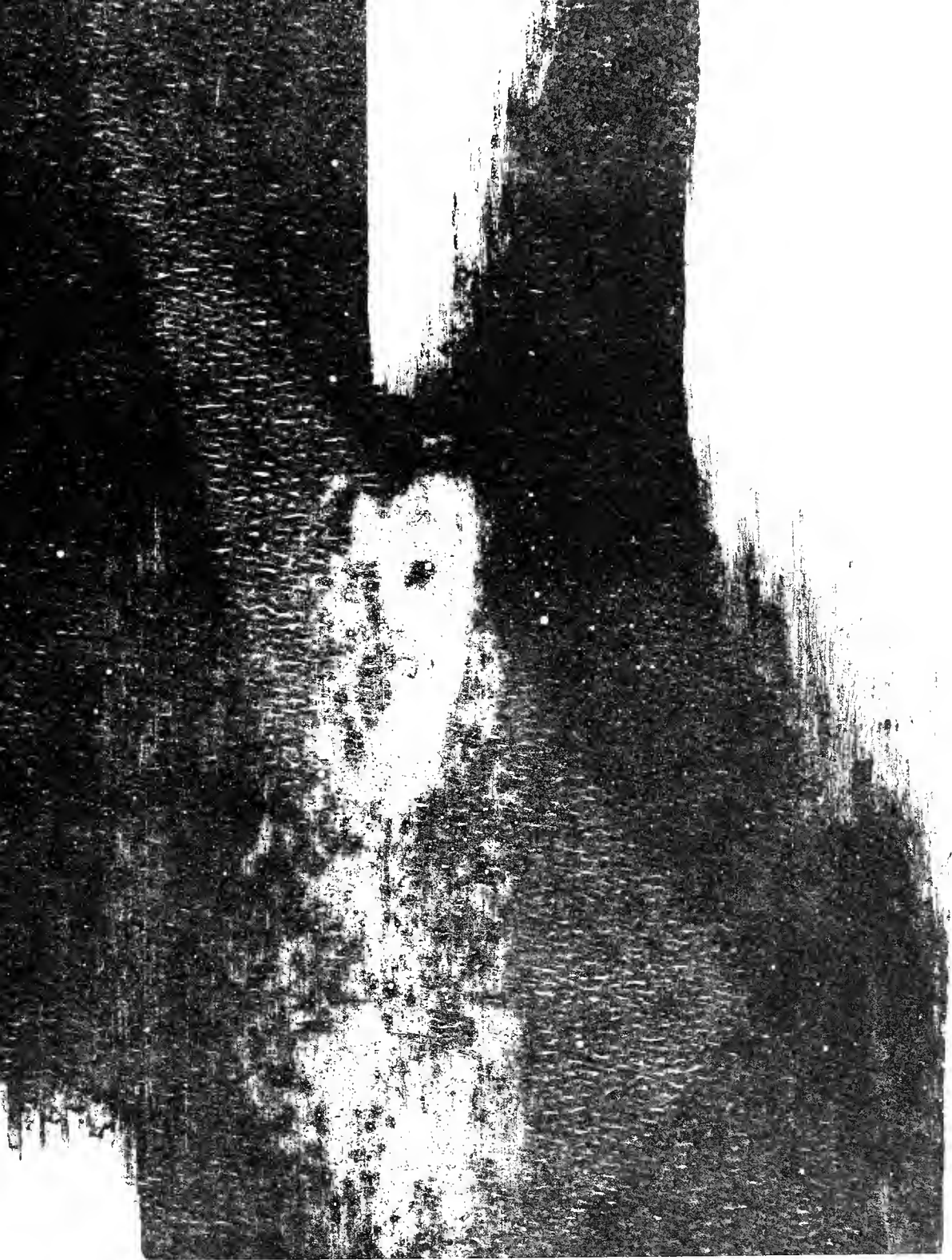
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### **Preface to an Amateur Ashtray**

The words of this, and every poem  
Will run through your fingers  
Like white water in spring,  
Leaving your hand groping and numb.  
A poem is no pottery piece  
Which even its malform,  
Serves as a kitchen ashtray  
On the window sill among the tomatoes;  
And whose pieces, long after it dropped  
And shattered all over the floor,  
With jutting, irregular edges  
Catch at curvings of skin,  
In button boxes and crevice of floor,  
Like an Indian nation you cannot surpress.

Sherry Buttrick, 1976

Christina Mills 1976

## **Of Temporal Measures**

In air surcharged with  
    essences of dayless faces,  
    and scenes in suspended progression,  
We run on subtle volcanoes.  
Where once, we suckled  
    with a foal's vital urgency,  
Gulping in the flow of moments;  
And relished in the lovely pains of growing.  
We pranced in meadows  
    bespecked with apples for the taking,  
Pausing always and deliberately  
    to gobble with insatiable appetite  
Breathing deeply of the days.  
    For we were abundantly alive  
        then  
    and free  
        until  
Yanked cruelly by circling hands,  
    We were crowded inside old and  
    terribly familiar fences.  
Caged spirits rampaging in vacuumous silence,  
Shuddering under surface careesses of the blind.  
We abide in too-present time.

Karen Adelson 1976



Cathy Harold 1979

## Soup For Lunch

Green Pea soup adlibbed with  
little furry chunks of pinkish ham fermenting  
into a broth of softly-formed peahalves.

Directions: place contents of can into pan,  
add one can cold water,  
simmer over medium heat until hot.  
Do not boil.

So I boiled it . . .

Great burbling bubbles of creamy green soup  
welling up from the bottom, and softly exploding;  
exposing for an instant an eyewinking, blackened hole  
through which the very soul of the soup can be glimpsed.  
The minor explosions send lazy drops of pale green  
slowly rocketing skyward,  
only to fall again into the willy writhing brew . . .

I ladled the boiled soup into bowls,  
and served it to my guests, cackling insanely inside myself  
all the while.

Ann Lux Yellott 1976

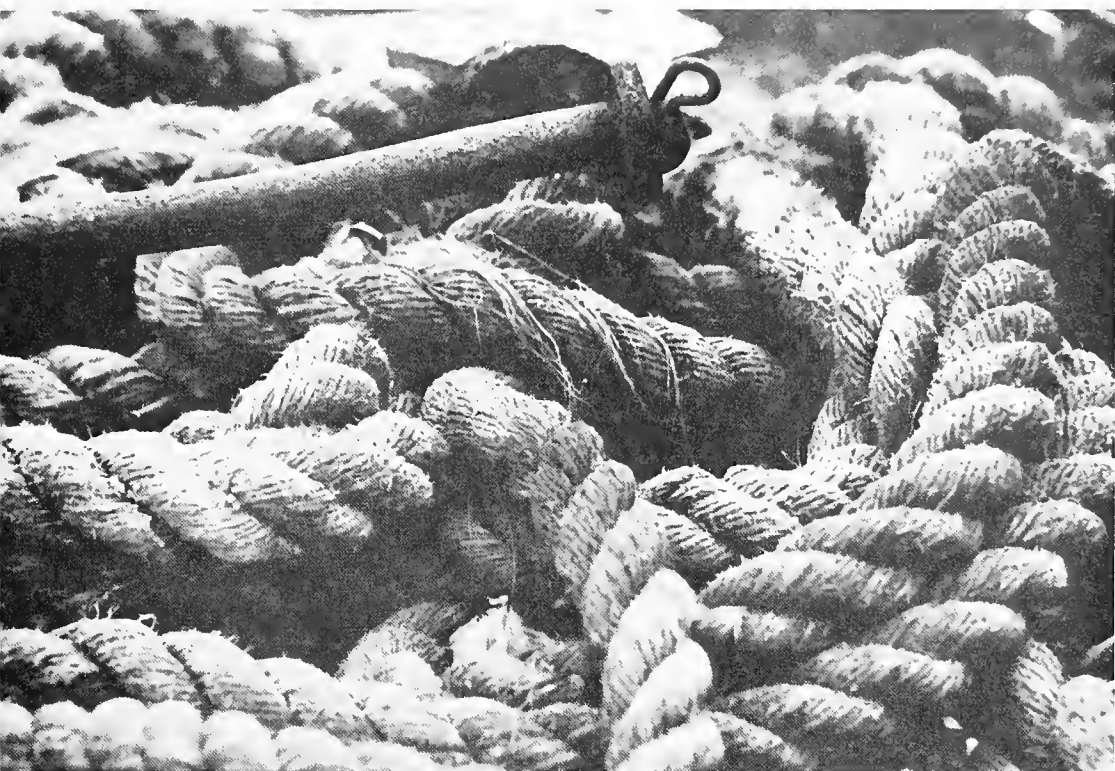


Elizabeth Farmer 1976

## **Complainte de l'O.S.**

J'ai travaille jusqu'a la fin  
A ma sueur gagne mon pain  
A l'atelier soir et matin  
Et me voici! le front ride!  
J'ai vu la mort venir trop tot  
Ma vie a file sans repos  
A la cadence des marteaux  
Et me voici! La main tranchee!  
La machine m'a devore  
J'arrive a toi dechiquete  
Au triste pas des condammes  
Et me voici! les reins broyes!  
Je n'avais qu'un soleil voile  
Des plantes maigres at dessechees  
Dans des cites de prisonniers  
Et me voici! Le coeur brise!  
Avec des freres en rangs serres  
Chaque matin avons lutte  
Pour une terre transformee  
Et me voici! l'espoir coupe!  
Je n'avais qu'eux pour m'entrainer  
Vers des promesses de clarte  
Et me voici! des rangs raye!  
Mais ils seront des milliers  
A chercher  
La plage d'or sous les paves!  
Mais ils seront des milliers a chercher  
La plage d'or sous les paves!  
La plage d'or sous les paves . . .

Mme. Somerville



Deborah Mutch 1976

## Late

Because the dryer was broken, running cheaply on a piece of paper wedged in the coin slot, I developed an acquaintanceship with Lyle MacDonell into something more. The laundry room was halfway down the row of twenty rooms that made up "Quarters; New", back side. The bathroom, walkthrough to the front side, was beside the laundry room. Two doors down was Lyle's room.

Once I folded his clothes for him. I didn't know they were his. I just wanted to use the dryer. While I was waiting, sitting on the concrete walkway outside the door, back pressed against a hot wall of white-painted bricks, Lyle came for his clothes. He came out of his door backwards, talking, one arm staying inside longer than the rest of him, gesturing or reaching for something. His feet fretted and oriented themselves in the direction of the laundry room until the arm emerged, terminating in a can of beer. He didn't have a shirt. He didn't have shoes. He didn't have a good hard-muscled body. He did have dungarees and a graceful, very upright way of walking.

I watched him start walking toward me. He was shaking hair away from his forehead and drinking beer at the same time. Then, sitting there, I turned my head to stare out over the gravelly little parking lot. Looked nonchalant. I extended my gaze to the sweep of trash-laden slope behind the lot, was about to include a few trees when his knees passed by and interrupted the view. He turned in the laundry room, paused, and came out with the clothes.

"You fold these?" he said.

"Yes."

"But you didn't have to. You could have thrown them on the table or something."

"Yes."

"Thanks."

"It's okay. I just wanted to use the dryer." I stopped looking at his feet and squinted up past the armload of clothes to his face. He looked apologetic. Also familiar. Though most everyone around did.

"I don't mean to leave my clothes in there so long. It's just that I get to sleeping, or watching TV, and the dryer keeps going and going."

"I know. It's a good sort of dryer, isn't it?"

"Sometimes I put the money in though. Because I always think it might stop. Even with the paper. Right after I leave." He shrugged and smiled then to tell me he knew it was stupid to put money where you don't have to. I saw the place in his smile where four teeth used to be—dead center front, upper row—and placed who he was.

"Hello, Lyle."

"You know me?"

"After a fashion. You fell out of a truck a month ago, didn't you? You and Bobby Lyte?" I meant to say that Bobby had been driving, not falling, but it didn't come out right. I knew I was right about Lyle, though. He still looked wrecked. The teeth—or lack of—and a good noticeable scar on his forehead. He didn't look bad. Just wrecked.

"You heard about that!" He liked me knowing that. He smiled wide and shook his hair again. I laughed. He had this mass of blond curls that made for the center of his face whenever they got the chance. He was always shaking them back up. On windy days he'd face into the wind like a happy dog hanging out a car window—chin tilted up and hair flying behind him.

"I took the bad flipper" he said. "I was drunk. I shouldn't have been sitting on tailgates drunk. But come on, you don't have to be sitting here. The dryer takes forever. If it wasn't free it wouldn't be worth it, would it? Come on, you use my room—don't mind the mess. You can watch TV, you can read, you can talk to me . . . Jesus, I just thought of something—you can put my clothes away, handy little thing like you. He laughed at that. "Kidding."

"Sure" I said.

"You know, I know you. I bet I knew you before you ever knew me." We got to be friends then.

I was living with Carole in "Quarters: Married Couples." We weren't married. We weren't even coupled. We were quartered, and we are friends. Feelings are strong between us. We drift in the same currents. We had the room in Married Couples because there never was any "Quarters: Female" and to the security force, "Married" sounded like the next purest thing. Security controlled housing.

Our room wasn't bad. It was one in a row of ten, "Rm. 4," one window and a door in front, two windows and brick in back. The remaining two walls were strange in that the one on Carole's side of the room was plywood, while mine was brick. I used to lie in bed and look at the many sad shallow holes in the bricks where people had tried to get a nail in. You can't nail brick. The nail bends, the hammer vibrates, your hand hurts, and sometimes the brick chips a little. I knew this. One of the useless holes was from me. We put shelving and nails on Carole's side.

Another unusual thing about my wall was that it mostly didn't meet the ceiling. "Married Couples" roof pitched from front to back and evidently the builders couldn't conform the bricks of my wall to the slope of the ceil-

ing. They missed the ceiling by an average of half a foot. In matters of odor, conversation and lighting we were at one with Rm. 5. A girl lived there alone, a small unfriendly girl. She gave the impression of being lovely, but I never knew for sure, I never looked her full in the face, I never met eyes. I saw the back of her head, and the kerchief she wore there often, but it was always the back of her head; she was always turning and moving away from me as I saw her, elusive as destinations in my dreams. Yet I knew her. I knew how she drew potato chips from the bag one by one and rested them on her tongue for a second before crunching. I knew what radio station she fell asleep to. I knew her cough—the vigorous, unselfconscious, prolonged cough of a person who lived alone. My own stomach would contract when I heard her start coughing, and stay tight until I heard the final cough in a series, the deeper cough that brought up the phlegm. She had a summer cold.

I knew how she fumbled for a small wooden box, replaced its cover, and tore a piece of paper when she rolled a joint. I knew when she smoked it, sometimes not right away, but later—later when I was asleep the sweet, evocative smell drifted over the wall and jerked me awake as surely as a hand on my shoulder. I knew what she said to men who came into her room.

—Hello. Please lock the door behind you.

Twice, late at night, when I walked past her door it was open. Both times I saw the same thing—etched in my memory as clearly as families I saw from the windows of Boston's elevated trains; families watching TV, families sitting around small tables, whole rows of families boxed behind glass in lighted rooms.

—Hello. Please lock the door behind you.

I saw her lying on a mattress. The mattress was on the floor in the far corner of her room. She was lying on the mattress curled up, with face to the wall. There was a dark indian-print cloth bunched in her hands and twisting under one bare leg. On the floor near her feet, there was a nearly extinct red candle in a green glass jar. Everything was dim. Talking up, glancing in, walking on—I saw her twice this way. Each time the feeling of hot, dull, stupefied sleep hit me like a gust.

I knew everything about her that could be crumpled up and passed to me through a six inch gap on top of a wall. I never knew her name or face.

Sometimes I wondered how much she knew of Carole and I. It might have been nothing. Carole didn't know anything about her. Carole was like that. Intelligent, perceptive, sensitive—all that and she ranged her mind in straight lines. Some things just didn't interest her. That interested Carole—

and me, but she didn't consider him a field of my interest—was Merle. The rhythm of her pursuit and eventual tenuous capture of Merle had occupied her mind for a long time. She thought too much of him. Too much, but I liked him. He stayed in the room sometimes.

—Hello, Merle. Please . . .

“Lyle, it's me. Lyle, let me in. I want to talk to you.”

“Can you wait til I get my pants on?”

“I don't care about your pants.”

“Too bad. They're on now.” He opened his door. Yawning, smiling through the yawn, hands messing with his pants, hair wild. When Lyle opened his door to me, my first impression was always the same. That he was still reassuringly and unchangingly Lyle. Just Lyle. A person who looked as though he'd be dumb, but wasn't. He wasn't. He had a quick, native intelligence.

He knew what people wanted.

“Come in. Now that I'm decent.”

“Why is it, why is it Lyle, that whenever I knock on your door you have to get dressed?”

He spun in a circle, stalked like an Indian around the room, came back and shook me. Looked menacing. “Because I'm shy.”

“No, I meant why aren't you ever dressed to begin with.”

“Oh. Because . . . Because I like to look at my legs? Because I beat off behind closed doors?” He whistled a bar of “When She Gets Behind Closed Doors” and grinned. “Because it's hot, stupid. It's so hot. I used to sleep in the nude. With the door open. I quit it last week.” He was heaving clothes, an ashtray, a rotten looking bunch of grapes, and an old Sunday paper off the end of the bed. “Here. You can sit here. Don't say I'm not hospitable.”

I sat. He handed me a pillow, reached for a bottle two-thirds filled with a black, evil-looking liquid, and settled himself. The TV was on with no sound and fuzzy lines whizzing through the picture. “What happened?” I said.

“What happened? Oh, why I quit—you know Dirty Harry?”

“Always drunk? Old guy?”

“Got one wooden leg?”

“Say ‘I'll fly you to Cuba on the tail of my kite’ all the time?”

“Yes, that's him. You got it. He came in here one night last week. Late, woke me up. He went to the refrigerator” Lyle pointed at the refrigerator, unnecessarily, it took up half the room—opened it, and found a pan of cold spaghetti. And sauce. I wouldn't have minded so much if he'd just

walked out with the whole thing, but what he did was stand there and stick his hands in. That's when I woke up and yelled. I figured it out the next day, because there was spaghetti and sauce gunked all over the refrigerator and floor."

"So that's why you don't leave your door open now?"

"Yes, but that wasn't the worst of it. The worst of it was when I went to get dressed up and go out, two, three days later. I went to put on those pants over there." He pointed vaguely at clothes hanging by the door.

"Huh?" I said.

"He'd wiped his hands on my pants as he went out the door. Trying to be neat, I guess."

"Oh." I looked at him. Tried not to laugh because he looked so serious, but laughed anyway. Lyle glowered at me as best he could, gave it up and kicked me.

"Be serious" he said. He cocked his head at the TV. "Look, 'Cabaret's on. I've seen it three, four times. Liza Minelli's being seduced by that guy, but she won't have a thing to do with him. She thinks he's queer."

I looked at the TV. A clear space came between the lines. I didn't recognize much in the way of TV shows, but I knew Johnny Carson when I saw him. "That's the Tonight show, you boob."

It startled Lyle. He sat up straight and stared hard. "You know," he said, "it is the Tonight show. But I was seeing 'Cabaret.' I was seeing Liza, just how she moved and tossed her head. I was going to get up and turn the sound on so I could hear the songs." He looked perplexed. "Now why did I see that?"

I looked at the television again. The lines were back. "Picture's bad" I said. "What's that you're drinking?"

He laughed. The connection didn't escape him. "This" he said, lofting the bottle, "this—is Nova Scotian Screech. You can only get it in Nova Scotia. It's famous, really." He handed the bottle to me.

The label was lettered in purple. It stated, quite simply, "SCREECH." When I tasted it my whole mouth recoiled. It tasted as thick and bitter and acidic as anything I'd ever had. Like pine tree sap. I thrust the bottle back at Lyle. Made a face. "It's awful. No wonder your mind's gone."

"It isn't and it's not" Lyle said. He took another drink. "You know, I think this stuff is the best in Canada. They scrape it from the bottom of the barrels they make rum in. Makes it strong."

"Oh, I believe that" I said. "Maybe you just have to be Canadian to appreciate it." I thought about it a minute. "I'm glad I'm not Canadian." Lyle didn't hear me. He was lying there with his eyes closed. He looked old.



Lyle was twenty-eight. Twenty-eight seems to me the most desirable age for a man to be. I don't know why. But I didn't desire Lyle. There was nothing that attractive about him. Physically. He had that kind of stomach men pull their pants up to, but not over. It billows out over their belts. Except, sometimes, in crowds, I see an old man who has this stomach wearing great baggy brown pants that reach up to the middle of him. The belt in the brown pants will circumscribe the old man's stomach as neatly as a latitudinal band a few degrees north of the equator—guard against slippage. Lyle had that stomach. Small rear and nice legs—but that stomach.

Lyle opened his eyes, put his right foot in front of my face, and looked at me alertly. "See that toe?" he said. I focused in on the different looking one of the five. It was his first toe, not the big toe, but the next one. His index toe. It had a tender pink aura, as though it had been split open. A new toenail was growing in, pushing aside a blue lifeless one.

"That toe is because of Screech" Lyle said. "When I was in Pennsylvania. Screech and a few other things. I hadn't been too good for a few days—it can build up on you. The crazy feeling. I woke up one night and saw a snake in my room. A huge snake, a seven-foot snake, a kind of snake that didn't belong in Pennsylvania. It moved toward me a little, and I got scared. I kicked it as hard as I could. I kicked it and kicked it until I kicked it away—and then I felt the blood running down my leg and saw I'd smashed my toe. The wall was bloody." He looked at the bottle. "You did that to me, didn't you?" he said to the bottle. Then Lyle looked at me. "You know, I'm going home this weekend. My sister's getting married. I got the word from home: my name will be mud if I don't show." He couldn't stay awake any longer.

I walked down and got my clothes, went back to Lyle's room and shut off his light. I closed the door for him and said "Goodnight, Lyle."

I heard him say something as I walked away. "Mud" he said. "Mud." I didn't see Lyle again for a long time. I missed him. I got to know someone else from that row of rooms to talk to, but it wasn't like Lyle.

Carole had a friend named Wanda. Maybe we both had her, but she liked Carole better than me. Wanda was pretty, and always dressed a notch or two prettier than anyone else. In my case, several notches. She was very self-involved. Her conversation was punctuated by "oh, you know me's" and "but I'm just not that type of girl" and lots of "so I says to him—." She loved to talk about medical problems (her own), the tough luck life dealt her (a seemingly inordinate amount), and—favorite topic—her moral fastidiousness and everyone else's lack of. She talked continually, listened sometimes, understood little, construed a great deal, and spewed everything forth at the

touch of a question. If I'd ever wanted any personal aspect of my life broadcast I would have told it to Wanda, in confidence. I never did, but I talked to Wanda when I wanted to find out anything about anybody.

"I was noticing, Wanda, how bright and clean your clothes always look. Do you use that washing machine up in New Quarters?" (This sounded so weak to me I had a hard time saying it seriously, but with Wanda, it's the weaker the better.)

Wanda explained her system of washing clothes to me. She used her mother's washing machine and enzymes. I listened respectfully and waited for a place to get into the conversation again. It came.

"You know, Wanda" I said, "that's just what I'll do next time. And it will be easier waiting, too. You know, only one person was ever nice enough to talk to me a minute up there. Someone named Lyle. But you probably know him."

The name clicked. "Lyle? Lyle MacDonell?"

"Yes" I said. "That's the one."

Wanda sniffed. She knew something about him. "Nice! He's not nice. He's wild!"

I was happy to hear that. But what I said was "Oh, no, Wanda. Not—not *wild*?"

"Do you remember Janice Parker?" I thought hard and realized I did remember her. A friend of Wanda's. A girl with very blonde hair and a pink, pinched rabbitish face. I hadn't seen her for months. "Lyle used to love her. They were going to get married. She loved him. They lived together for a few months—I thought it was stupid, but you know me—I suppose they were practically engaged, after all."

Wanda paused dramatically and I thought it over a little. I believed it. I could almost remember seeing the two of them together. Almost. "But what happened, Wanda?"

"Lyle got wild. Simply wild."

"How so?"

"Well, from what Janet told me, he started making things pretty miserable for the both of them. He'd go out to eat and stay for hours. When she asked him where he'd been, all he'd say was "With some friends." He used to play cards. For money. Then he'd stumble in nights and fall asleep with his clothes on. First Janet asked him things—reasons—politely, then she demanded, then she screamed, but nothing worked. He'd gone wild. Janet loved him, but she couldn't like him, then she got so she loved him, but hated him for being wild—and finally she found out she was pregnant, and

she ran away. She was afraid to tell him, I think she tried but never could. So she found a job out of state as a live-in babysitter for a man who'd lost his wife. That was last fall. At Christmas, Janet called me. She'd just married her employer. He knew about the child, and he promised Janet he'd raise it as though it were their own. And in April, I got a birth announcement from Janet. She'd had a baby boy. That was all I ever heard. But I think she's happy. God knows, she deserved to be. After all the heartache Lyle MacDonell put her through." Wanda stared at me. "I suppose, I suppose it is possible to think Lyle nice at first. But once you know his true nature!"

"Indeed, Wanda" I said, "you can't judge a book by it's cover." And I left her.

That afternoon I was lonely. Carole had gone somewhere with Merle. Three other people I knew well enough to be with weren't in their rooms. Not even the girl in Rm. 5 was home. I lay on my bed and thought a long time, then I fell into a deep, drugged sort of sleep. Around four I slowly became aware of tremendous noise, very close. There was a bulldozer on the little strip of grass directly behind the room. I didn't know why it was there, but it was. I had a mirror mounted on the back of the front door, and it reflected the scene through our curtainless back window perfectly. There were five men swarming around the one bulldozer. While I watched, the operator shut the bulldozer off and said to the man beside him "Time?" That man shook his head and said to the man on the bulldozer's tracks "Time?" He didn't know and turned to ask the man behind the bulldozer. That man shrugged his shoulders and said "I wish I knew it" and turned to the man on the ground beside my window. A hot argument started above about whether quitting time had passed yet. The thing was settled when the man by my window yelled "Wait! I see a clock." He stuck his head in my window. I couldn't act sleeping anymore. I sat up and yelled "IT'S FOUR-FIFTEEN" to the five of them in general. Then I walked out of my room, and left them and their bulldozer behind me. I went to the cafeteria and ate with three people I didn't like.

Lyle came back that night. It was a hot night. We watched a movie called "The Locusts" with the door open. During the commercials he swatted flies with a blue flip-flop sandal and told me about Nova Scotia. He gave me a little book he'd bought at the airport and I read it through. It was all about two giants that came from Cape Breton Island, a man and a woman, and how they'd lived as giants.

I asked him once if he knew he had a child. He said he knew, but he'd

never seen him. He didn't ask me how I had come to know that. He did say "she tried to tell me, but I just didn't realize at the time."

Much later, I said "Lyle, do you consider yourself wild?"

He thought that over. "Some people have called me that, but I don't think I am" he said. "Mostly, I'm just me. Lyle."

"I think that's enough to be, Lyle" I said. "You're a good person. Even if you're wild." The picture of the TV went all gray, but we listened the movie out to the end.

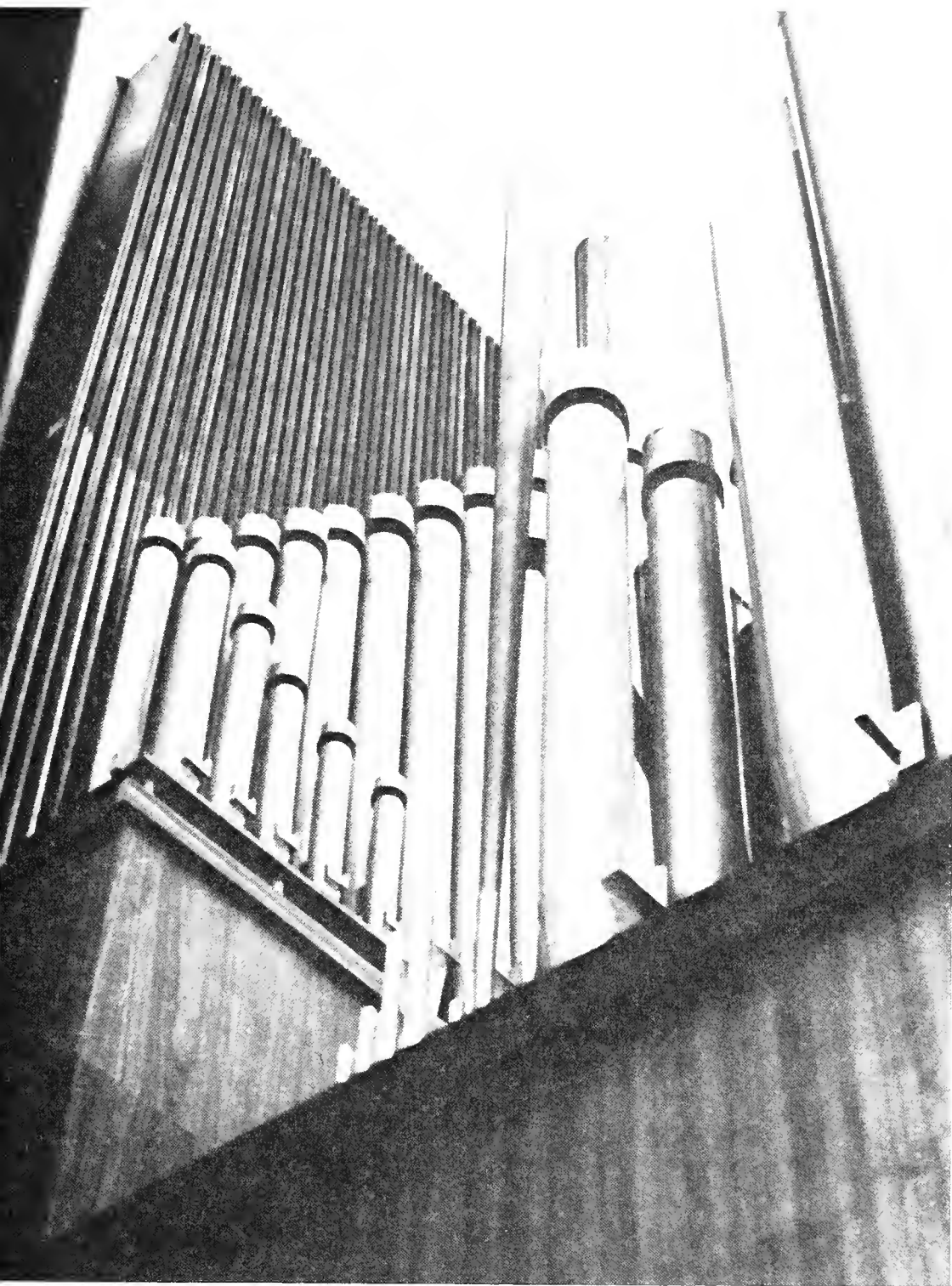
Jean Romanske 1977



## She

Come, sullen woman:  
    Flaunt that dark body.  
Enhant all  
    but those you would;  
Then chant sweet innocence from those sterile eyes.  
Your kind has slouched this way before;  
    Smiling passionless,  
        calculating the response.  
Naked Truth slinks  
    into garments of horror,  
    shocked by that meditated propriety.  
You summon blood—lust passion;  
    then suck your victim clean—  
        into the filth of your commands.  
The stench of your desire clings unnoticed,  
    ensnaring all in subtle embrace.  
Ready,  
    ill-prepared,  
        hopelessly willing:  
Your prey hangs in weary flight;  
    Instinct, intellect—  
        all denied.  
Surrendered unknowingly  
    to your evil demands.  
Bitter obligation is your fee:  
    no ransom accepted.  
Sinister lady:  
    The game is yours.  
You manage to win,  
    even after you have lost all interest.  
You have no opponents—  
    They have no desire to accept  
        the empty prize you leave behind.  
But, ah, if capture is your only mission,  
What becomes of your prey  
    when finally taken?  
    The chase is transient—  
    The kill is deadly . . .

Ann Lux Yellott 1976



Deborah Mutch 1976



Carrie Griscom 1977



## Dialysis

He took away his tubes:  
Let his kidneys poison him, slowly.  
Because it took a long time  
for the blood to wander through the machine,  
the vital fluids to be purged—  
Because for twelve hours twice a week  
he endured the exchange drop by excruciating drop—  
Two months later he cut the apron strings,  
that evening, a deliberate castrator.  
He reached for his pipe & had a smoke,  
reflecting on his (very) late release  
from the battery cell giant  
that smelled like Nurse's breath  
as she reached across him,  
a hole in her uniformed armpit.

They wheeled the machine away;  
it squeaked as usual,  
its heaviness complaining  
like his wife.

Now the long (?) wait,  
the accusing stares.

He fooled the doctors who  
“gave” him two weeks, maybe three;  
he stopped fooling himself.

One night he had a vision  
in which god was lecturing mother nature,  
saying:

A snail has to come  
half-way out of its shell  
in order to crawl.

He woke up in a sweat  
like slime.

Two months passed  
with him still lingering  
like the last drops of blood  
the machine had kept  
on the night of his release.

At the end only the foul-breathed nurse  
heard his coma-fringed farewell:  
Restored to the vegetable-god: his ichor.

—Clarissanielsen 1977



Christina Mills 1976

Zoo: ah yes! Star fine baby goats with milk teeth  
and autumn air eyes,  
full of life. . . (and orange juice and toast . . . )  
longing for their mothers' milk and live in  
every sinewy muscle,

Were you a long legged mudcracker in another life?  
With 'em rough-tough pony to cowboy your vitality . . .  
Or a head strong bond with silver bracelets?  
Did you ever breath the buzzing city air  
on a nightwalk off of a moonlit fire escape . . .  
grey upon black in such proud procession?  
Or wake up to mornings bitching orange fingers  
all over your face . . . . .  
And do caterpillars think its the end whilst  
they peel their skins and metamorphosize into  
their light winged and colored selves?  
Ah yes, passing into another life, labor  
with its gnef and ten flood  
with paper-mached wings.

Cathy Calello 1979



funny little man  
grey rumpled raincoat  
cigarette in hand,  
do you think  
    you're  
    Bogart?

Chaplinesque stagger,  
baggy trousers,  
perhaps only  
simply a case of  
    too much  
    gin

Beth Reeves 1976



Allyson Wilmer 1976

## Ptolemy

Moon A lady loose and haughty from courtly love  
Awakens flushed.  
Couched in cloud subtlety,  
She imitates art,  
Awaits archetype.  
Waxing untarnished, unrivaled in the airs,  
She invites the attentions of her courtiers the  
Tides Midnight mimics who flatter and beckon secretly  
In mock deference to her will  
Embroidering liquid tapestries  
With Halloween hands,  
Returning the reversed image to the  
Moon Melting in velvets,  
Surrounded by polished pewter  
Intoxicated by her ocean shine  
Blind to the betrayal in the looking glass,  
She is seduced by  
Stars Each a single note from Pan's pipe  
Woven into madrigal  
Spliced into flute theme for the  
Moon Reeking upon a Renaissance canvas  
Waning, twisting her face toward light  
In defiance of obstruction as the  
Stars Diminishing at the end of the phrase,  
Dissolve into the background  
Upon the return of the  
Sun Who creeps up quietly  
Behind the orange haunches of the dawn  
Draws the curtain slowly upon the stages of morning  
Pounces upon the battlements to surprise the sulking  
Moon Shrivelling, slipping  
Like Duessa exposed and stripped  
Into the nether corners of darkness.

Deborah Mutch 1976





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